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PM# 40009999 R9375

A Reformed Biweekly | 67th Year of Publication | May 13, 2013 | NO. 2960 | \$2.50

[www.christiancourier.ca](http://www.christiancourier.ca)

# CHRISTIANCOURIER



## A spring to be forgotten

**Mike Wevers**

Springtime is late in many parts of our country. Canadians are frustrated that the vernal blooms which should be heralding the earth's rebirth from its winter slumber remain frozen in the ground. So too world events keep us in a seeming unending grip of malaise, conspiring malevolently with the weather to prolong winter's bitterness. One new despot seeks to hold the world hostage to his nuclear ambitions, one old dictator doesn't realize his time is up, and two brothers held one of the proudest cities in the United States hostage to fear.

### An unsettled Korean Peninsula

Current events this spring have been dominated by the new boy running things in North Korea. Some had hoped that when Kim Jong-un took power, he would usher in some welcome relief following his father's despotic rule, which kept the northern part of the Korean peninsula isolated and impoverished for decades. Initially, there was some cause for hope as Kim Jong-un replaced his father's military leadership with his own, transferring significant power to Choe Ryong-hae, who already commanded authority within the North Korea's Communist Party. Apparently, however, replacing the old guard and consolidating military power within the political regime was in no way meant to reduce North Korea's belligerence nor its quest to have nuclear warhead and delivery capability.

The country also threatened to withdraw from the 1953 Korean

Armistice, which established the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas. There was never any Peace Agreement to finalize the Korean Conflict, so such a threat raises the ominous possibility that one of the largest armies in the world could move across the DMZ to attack South Korea. That, of course, would bring the United States into an Asian conflict it has no desire to be a part of.

Kim Jong-un's antics may have pushed his primary benefactor, the People's Republic of China, into greater collaboration with the United States. China and the United States jointly drafted a United Nations Security Council sanctioning North Korean for its nuclear tests and ignoring previous UN directions. Most recently, the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staffs, General Martin Dempsey, met with China's leaders in Beijing to continue to work on a joint response to North Korea's actions, significantly increasing the isolation of China's Korean ally.

While the diplomatic and military responses to Kim Jong-un's provocations appear to have moved his country away from the centre of the world stage at this time, it is still far from certain how his nation will act in the future. Some pundits believe all his recent behaviour has been boyhood bravado; yet Kim Jong-un does have the military capability to translate his bluster into an Asian calamity.

### Unsettling Middle East tensions

With the promised hope of the Arab spring faltering in many of

the countries where it found life, particularly with ongoing challenges in Egypt, the Middle East remains in turmoil. In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad clings to power using all military means to resist the rebellion set on toppling his regime. While the United States has successfully engaged its old Cold War enemy in the Far East by getting China's support to try and contain North Korea, it has had no such success in obtaining the help of Russia in the Middle East. Russia, America's Cold War nemesis, continues to back the



*A moment of silence observed on campus for fallen MIT police officer Sean Collier.*

Syrian regime and thwart any United Nations Security Council actions. As a result, there has been

no concerted UN effort to oust President al-Assad, as there was  
*See Spring on page 2*

## Thatcher: a pioneer, not a paradigm for women in politics today



*Since Thatcher, there have been over 50 female leaders worldwide.*

**Rachel Baarda**

When former British Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher died on April 8, 2013, Britons greeted news of her passing with both mourning and rejoicing. On one hand, the British govern-

ment unrolled its red carpet for her, holding a ceremonial funeral. On the other hand, a popular *Wizard of Oz* song, "Ding Dong! the Witch is Dead," topped radio charts in the week following Thatcher's death, becoming an anthem that cele-

brated her death. The one emotion Margaret Thatcher failed to elicit among Britons was indifference. More than 20 years after she held public office, neither her friends nor her foes had forgotten her.

Thatcher's premiership was memorable for many reasons, but she was particularly remembered for her economic policies, which came to be known as "Thatcherism." Margaret Thatcher was elected in 1979, when Britain was known as the "Sick Man of Europe." In the aftermath of two world wars, Great Britain had lost its empire and even its position as an economic powerhouse in Europe. Thatcher blamed socialism for the nation's woes, and she instituted new free market policies, cutting taxes, privatizing compa-

*See Thatcher on page 2*



## News

Spring *continued*

for Libya's Col. Gaddafi.

While South Korea somewhat quietly let the United States take the lead in responding to its northern neighbour's sabre rattling, the United States ally in the Middle East has no interest in such quiet diplomacy. Of course, Israel has more to fear. While North Korea's military actions remain primarily threats, the ongoing military conflict in Israel's northern neighbour is very real. Israel has also pointed to recent evidence that the Syrian government is using chemical weapons against its rebels. This has to be doubly unsettling to Israel: the proximity of such weapons to its northern border, and no comfort if the rebels are successful, either. Then the control of chemical weapons will transfer to a rebel regime that has little tolerance of Israel's inability to reach a peace accord with the Palestinians.

The greatest obstacle to finding a solution to this complex diplomatic challenge is to determine, if indeed that is possible, what regime will replace President al-Assad in Syria, who most certainly will lose power. Unlike in Libya, where a successor regime is still grateful for UN assistance in "lib-

erating" its country from the Gaddafi dictatorship, the heir apparent in Syria may be more hostile to western interests than the current regime. In April, Syria's leading rebel faction pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic extremists are providing significant support to the rebels. Syria could be led by a coalition which would include the same extremists the United States is battling on other fronts in the Middle East and in worldwide terrorism. In fact, the Al-Qaeda connection gives credibility to President al-Assad's assertion that he is battling terrorists, and that his ongoing support within Syria is from Syrians who do not want an extreme Islamic regime to take power. Needless to say, that regime would also pose a significant threat to the state of Israel. Israel would be surrounded by a Palestinian neighbour with connections to Hezbollah and a Syrian neighbour with connections to Al-Qaeda. With neighbours like that, who needs enemies!

### Terror in the streets of America

Our southern neighbour witnessed first-hand the results of terrorism, as two brothers brought tragedy to the peaceful Boston Marathon. The boys, immigrants to the United States with Chechen ancestry, were able to replace the joy of that annual springtime event with the grief that death brings in such terrorist acts. For nearly a week, they were also able to bring the City of Boston to a virtual standstill while police forces searched them out. With the death of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, and capture of his younger brother, Dzhokhar, Americans came face to face with terrorism in their own borders, even in this tragic but limited way.

Recent reports have revealed that U.S. had received intelligence information from none other than Russia that Tamerlan had been in Europe where it is suspected that he was being instructed by Islamic extremists. Indeed, that intelligence led Tamerlan to be placed on a watch list some eighteen months before his Boston attack. It is again a les-



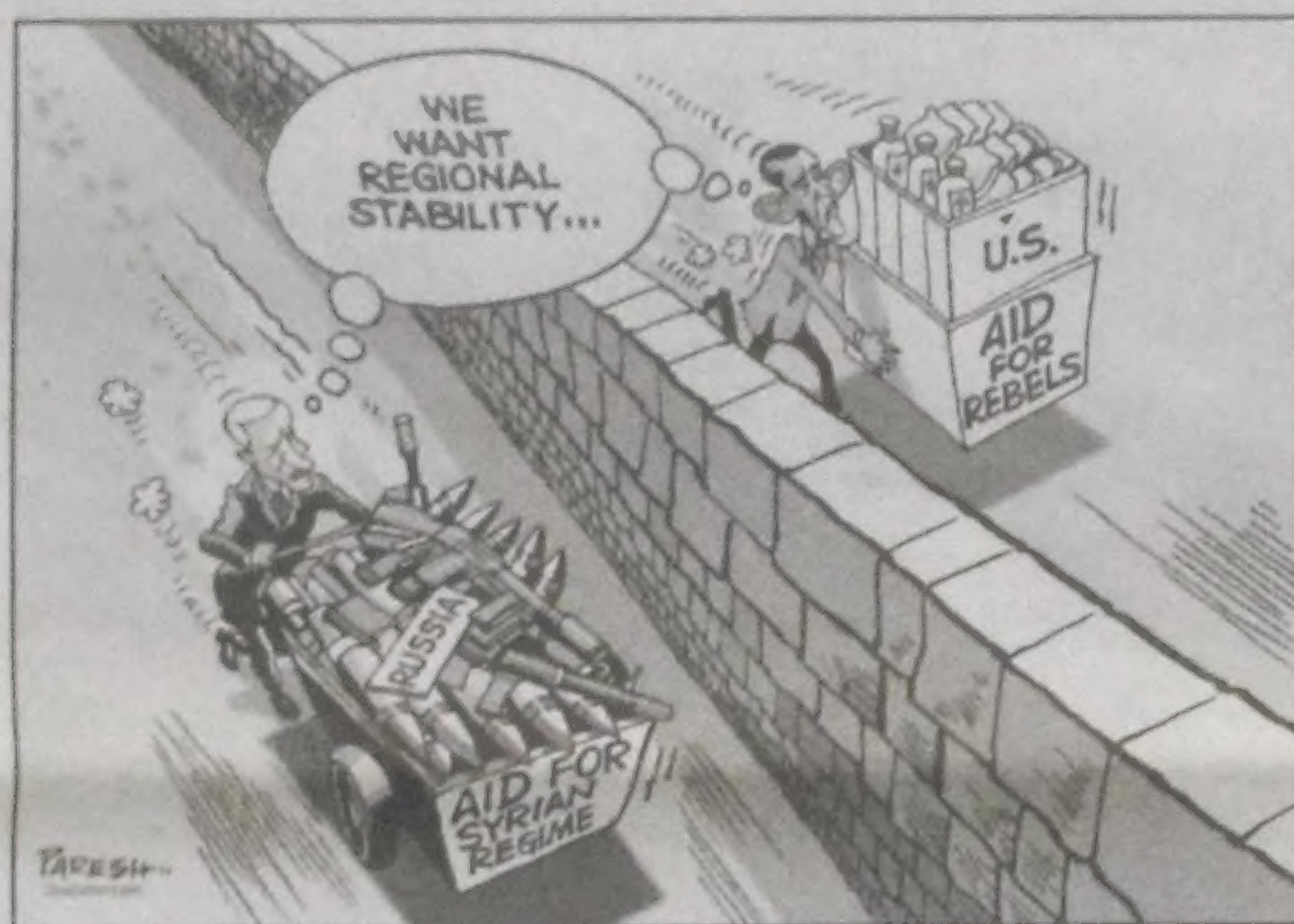
VIA terror suspect Esseghaier led off plane by RCMP.

son that even with the best intelligence available, it is nigh impossible to stop all would-be attackers. Constant vigilance is necessary, but not sufficient to stop them all. And Canada is not immune. Shortly after the Boston attack, the RCMP arrested some men who were allegedly planning to bomb a Via train out of Toronto with a U.S. destination.

### Life must go on

Reaction to the Boston bombing has generally been met with a resolve that "terrorists will not win." Marathons will continue, but with more security. Spring will come to Canada, even if it is short-lived as we pine for summer. And for Christians, spring is always punctuated by celebrating the resurrection of our Saviour. It is good to be reminded of this annually, and every Sunday, that notwithstanding the world's challenges, God's grace reigns. If we live that every day, then we too can say evil will not win.

Mike Wevers is a consultant in Edmonton still looking forward to the first tulip to spring forth in his yard, and certain it will come.



### Thatcher *continued*

nies and curbing the power of trade unions.

Some of Margaret Thatcher's actions – such as defeating a prolonged miner's strike – left some families poverty-stricken, many of whom never forgot their grievances and celebrated her death. Her critics have also observed that in the aftermath of her economic reforms, the gap between rich and poor widened. At the same time, some economists have praised her for promoting economic recovery and saving Britain from the bloated socialist policies that dragged it down in the 1970s.

Among other achievements, Thatcher was also memorable for another reason: she was Britain's first female prime minister. When Margaret Thatcher first took office in 1979, she was only the sixth female elected world leader in the 20th century. Since Thatcher, however, there have been over 50 female presidents or prime ministers worldwide.

Did Margaret Thatcher's political success (including 11.5 years of unbroken premiership, despite her unpopularity among certain segments of the nation) encourage later female national leaders?

### Opportunities for other women

If Margaret Thatcher's achievements spurred on other women, the inspiration did not come directly from her. Despite her success, Margaret Thatcher did little to promote other women into political office. During her 11-year tenure as prime minister, she only appointed one woman – Baroness Young, her close friend – to cabinet.

In keeping with her economic policies, Thatcher did not even believe the government should provide childcare for working women: she once suggested that women should find an aunt or grandmother to take care of their children for a few hours each week.



(Clockwise from left) Julia Gillard, Australian PM; Cristina Kirchner, Argentina's President and Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany.

She did not believe in affirmative action. Thatcher rose through the ranks of British politics by competing on an equal playing field with politically ambitious men, and expected other politically ambitious women to do the same, without any helping hand to make the political ladder easier for them to climb. She managed to retain her femininity – wearing dresses, holding handbags, and carrying out a private domestic life as a wife and mother – without losing the steel-willed exterior that earned her the title "the Iron Lady." In his biography of Thatcher, Hugo Young wrote,

### Does God choose women to lead?

What do we know about how God views leaders, whether male or female?

Romans tells us that even secular leaders are established by God (13:1-17). Still, there is a difference between modern-day secular leaders and leaders appointed directly by God, as in the days of ancient Israel. In most cases, God called male leaders; but Deborah the judge is proof that God doesn't limit leadership to one gender. In each case that God called a leader, male or female, he did so for a reason, knowing beforehand their specific gifts and potential. Moses and David, for example, had very different personality traits. God called each man to the position suitable for him: God knows the importance of a person being a good fit for his or her role.

"What is certainly not disputable is the reluctance of this controlled and controlling woman to treat women, politically, as any different from men."

Since Margaret Thatcher's day, governments and governing bodies have attempted to encourage more female participation in political office. The UN has identified six avenues of achieving this. These include equal educational opportunities and creating quotas for female participation in governing bodies. Several countries, including Brazil, Finland and Spain, have also passed gender quota laws.

### Women at the helm

These measures appear to be achieving their desired effect: as of January 2013, there were 17 female national leaders across the world, including leaders of prominent countries

See **Thatcher** on page 3



## News

## Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

## Love in the time of tolerance



I'm intolerant, and I'm proud of it.

For example, I don't tolerate people who cut in line. If I've been waiting for a fresh cup of Tim Horton's first thing in the morning and you butt into line ahead of me, be prepared for a blast of language like the fury of a fire-breathing dragon.

I also don't tolerate people who litter. If you drop something on the ground, I will stop whatever I'm doing, walk over to you, pick up the litter, put it in your hand and point you to the nearest garbage. At six foot five (and more pounds than I care to admit) I can be quite persuasive.

And there's another thing I don't tolerate: tolerance. I won't put up with tolerant people.

Now I know what some of you are thinking: "Amen, brother! This liberal, secular society of ours is way too tolerant! There's no room for good, old-fashioned values and morals anymore!" Now before you start printing off "I ♥ Stephen Harper" buttons for this particular "Big L" Liberal, I have to tell you – I'm not on your side, either.

Frankly, unless someone's behaviour affects me directly (cutting in line when I need my coffee) or is illegal or unethical (stealing, littering) I pretty much stay out of their way. That's because I think the whole notion of judging people for things that aren't my business is rude and dangerous. After all, we're told repeatedly in the Bible that when we judge others, we invite the same standard of judgment to be used to measure our own behaviour (See Matthew 7, for example). As my pastor, John Wildeboer, recently pointed out, often, the judgment we pass on others is just a means to make us feel better about ourselves.

So now you're probably asking yourself: "But if you're not on the side of moralism, don't you HAVE to be on the side of tolerance?" Nope – because tolerance is not the opposite of moralism at all. And here's why:

## True tolerance

Imagine you're at a candlelit dinner in a fancy restaurant. You look across the table into the most beautiful set of eyes you have ever seen – the one who, for years has sustained and nourished your soul, filled you with joy and

who makes your heart sing. A violinist appears and begins to play. The waiter pours some wine. It is a perfect, romantic moment and, overcome with it all you lean across the table and whisper, ever so gently into their ear:

"I tolerate you."

Hopefully, the throbbing palm-print on your face won't still be glowing red by the time the cheque arrives – but I think it'd be safe to say the evening is over at this point.

But why? If "tolerance" is such a virtue, why does saying you "tolerate" someone sound like such an insult?

That's because "tolerance" is simply good old fashioned, iron-fisted judgment wrapped in a velvet glove.

"Tolerance" isn't the same thing as "acceptance," though they're often used interchangeably. Rather, what "tolerance" really means is that you disagree fundamentally with something the other person does, or believes, or holds dear – but that you're willing to put up with it.

Tolerance, really, just means "I don't like who you are and what you do, but I suppose I have to live with it."

It's a terrible concept. It's a grudge, pocketed and locked away and replaced with an insincere smile, a shrug, a polite nod of the head. But the grudge is never far away, never really absent.

That's why, in John 13, we don't read: "A new command I give you: tolerate one another. As I have tolerated you, so you must tolerate one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you tolerate one another."

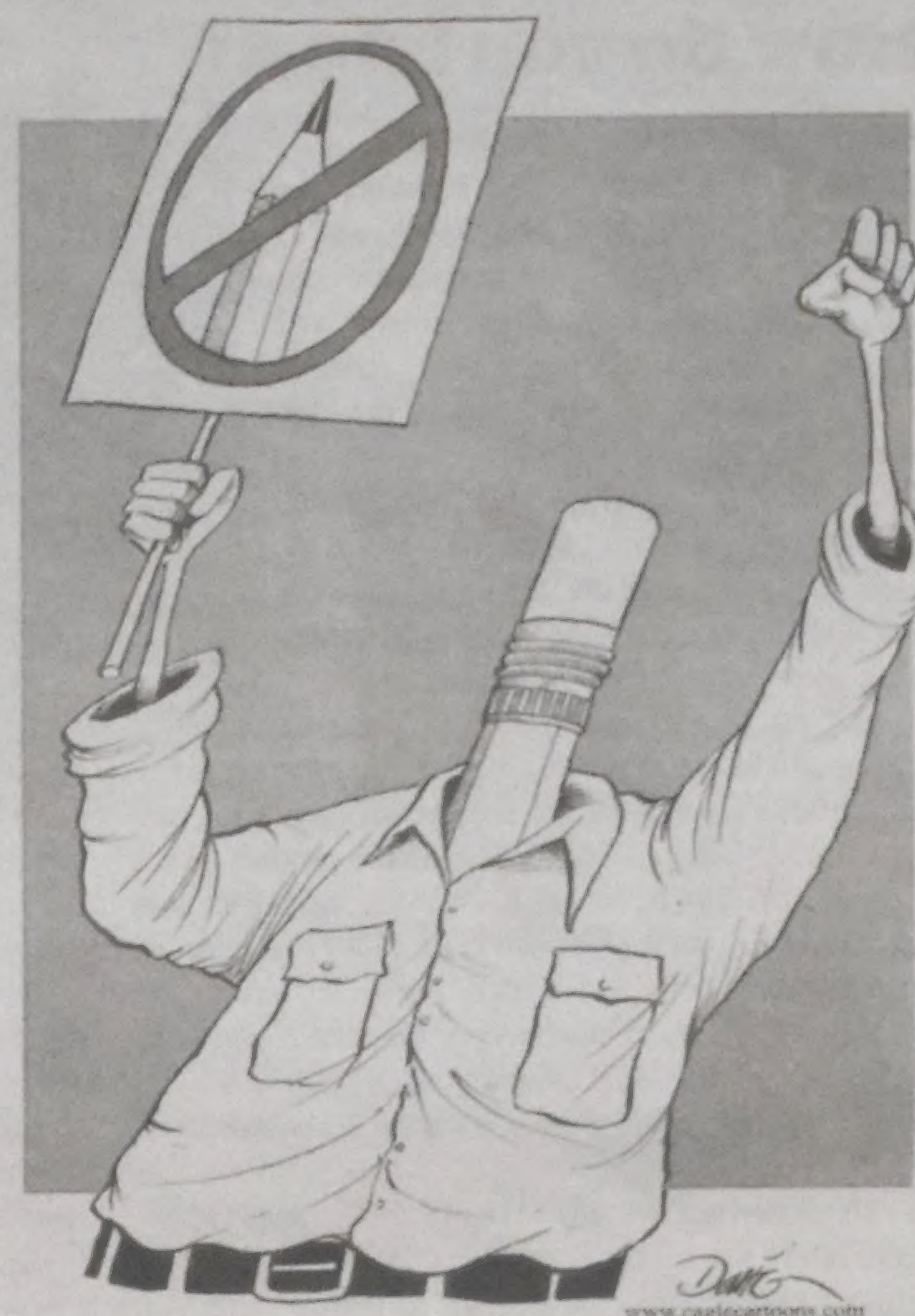
No, obviously, the word Jesus uses here is "love."

And that's what we're called to do: love one another.

It's also much, much harder to practice than tolerance. To truly love someone, you have to get over – or see past – those things that bother you about the other person. You have to make a conscious choice to view the other person as God does – as a child of his, who is dearly loved.

Tolerance is about holding the other person away from you as the "other." Love, on the other hand, means you must develop a relationship with the other – each as equal partners.

As Tom Gilson has pointed out, tolerance is also about pretending, as though differences don't matter. That we're all the same, somehow, even though we may obviously be very different from one another.



Love, on the other hand, revels in difference. Love knows that so often the differences between one partner and another make us fit for each other. Love knows that it is the difference between a son and a father that makes the relationship special. It's also what makes the relationship strained, sometimes, but that, too, is okay.

That's because "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." It is, truly, the "greatest of these."

And tolerance? It doesn't even come close.

Lloyd Rang (lloydrang@rogers.com)  
lives in Bowmanville, Ont.

## Thatcher continued

such as Germany (Angela Merkel), Argentina (Cristina Kirchner) and Australia (Julia Gillard). Canada currently has six female premiers, in Nunavut, Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia.

Women and men alike seem to agree that the rules of modern-day Western politics need to be changed to accommodate women. In a CBC News panel shortly after Margaret Thatcher's death, panelists observed that family considerations are a much more significant concern among women seeking political office than they are for men. Canadian political strategist Jaime Watt observed, "Politics has got to get a lot better at accommodating the interests of women, and I think you're going to see us do that" (Apr. 9).

There also seems to be a popular consensus that the female political style is different from and in some ways superior to men's. In a research study, the *American Journal of Political Science* concluded that women are better at "logrolling, agenda-setting, coalition building and other deal-making activities" (CNN, Jan.25/11).

If this is true, it means that including more women in the "game" of politics will change the rules of the game – from more hierarchical to more egalitarian; from one based on majority rule to one based on compromise.

If leaders change the rules of the political game to accommodate women, politics will inevitably change, and the type

of people – both male and female – suitable to the role of politics will also change. Margaret Thatcher emulated the political game played by male politicians of the 1970s and 1980s; but 30 years later, as more women enter politics, and as technologies like social media revolutionize government and as globalization and terrorism influence political policy, political strategies are changing.

God's Word provides us with the standard for justice, mercy and wisdom. Even though no secular or even Christian leader will live up to the standard perfectly – because the standard is Christ – as North Americans, we have the privilege of evaluating and choosing our own leaders based on the wisdom the Holy Spirit gives us. We also have the privilege of sharing our opinions about how politics should be structured – about who should be included and about what political policies and political systems are best. Margaret Thatcher didn't take any of her political privi-

leges for granted, and neither should we.

Rachel Baarda researched the political use of social media for her M.A. in Communications, and she is now writing articles for *The Social Media Monthly* (thesocialmediamonthly.com).  
She lives in Vineland, Ont.



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## Editorials

## We're disrupting creation? How do you know?



**John Elwood**

We creation care advocates, we're pretty sure of ourselves, aren't we? Let's face it. We've listened to the Na-

tional Academy of Sciences. We've read the research on global changes. We know all the "parts-per-million" data. We've seen the melting glaciers, and the shrinking ice cover. We know about sea levels, ocean acidification, and runaway species extinctions.

But let's face it: most people out there aren't nearly as alarmed as we're pretty sure they ought to be. After all, some say, scientists have been wrong before, no?

Then we talk to field workers on the ground, as we did on Monday (April 22) in Nairobi. World Renew leaders in Kenya told us story after story of escalating climate shocks and related human suffering. It's pretty credible stuff, and deeply alarming. But still, NGOs are in the crisis business, aren't they? Maybe they're dressing things up a bit for the visitors from North America?

So yesterday, we got a totally different perspective, and I hope you'll stick around to hear it. We took a long, muddy bus ride to one of the 300 churches in the Mount Kenya South Diocese of the Anglican Church here. Where I come from, Anglican churches are all granite and stained glass. This one, home to a rural Kikuyu congregation, let the daylight shine in through plastic panels in a rusted tin roof. It was pretty humble, to my Western eyes. But I thought it was a perfectly lovely place.

More lovely still, however, were the 17 Kikuyu women who run farms in the Diocese, and who had put their busy farm lives on hold to teach a few North Americans about the new challenges they face – trying to raise food in a broken climate system. Adorned in brilliant dresses and head scarves of every colour, they told us their stories. We promised them we'd tell them again back home. Here are a few, based on my scribbled notes:

**Isabelle:** *There used to be two planting seasons in*



*The crew learning from Job at his corn plot (Photo by CV).*

*the year. One was longer, and we called it the "lablab bean season." The other was shorter, and it was called the "millet season." But now, we don't have any planting seasons. We only plant when we see the rain. We used to be sure of the harvest, but not anymore. You plant, but you don't have a harvest.*

**Sarah:** *Last year, we planted, but we never harvested – except for a few beans and potatoes. We are confused. Water is a problem for us.*

**Grace Dodo:** *We used to fill a granary plus more stored outside. Now, we can't even fill the granary. The rains have changed, and the soil has been depleted.*

**Eleanor:** *Also, pests and diseases have increased. I'm not very old, but spider mites were never here before. When the spider mites come, we don't get a crop. The pests force us to sell crops earlier than before.*

**Another woman:** *We always talk to each other about the rain. You can't depend on the short rain anymore. Thank God for the technology.*

The technology? That's right. These women aren't just taking what this harsh new world is dishing out. Others will tell this story better than I – but with the help of World Renew, Care of Creation and others, the farmers are adopting "Farming God's Way" – what we'd call conservation agriculture. They mix crops together in the same plot, heavily mulch their fields with leaves and branches to conserve moisture and suppress weeds, plant with minimal disturbance of the soil, add manure and wood ash to enrich the soil, plant under-crops to enhance fertility, and maintain trees to shade crops from excess heat. Some have bought into Farming God's Way entirely, and others are testing plots side-by-side to see for themselves.

They're remarkably resourceful people, and they're doing everything possible to feed their families. But the changing climate is making it awfully hard.

And there's another irony: Here in this tin-roofed country church, the topic of climate change isn't even slightly controversial. It's not a debate. It's staring them in the face everywhere. It's a fact. But every one among our company of Westerners knows that in our churches back home, you talk this way at your own risk.

But now, we're talking. We promised these Kenyan women that we would. And maybe you'll find a way to join the conversation? Maybe an African family farmer is what Jesus would call "my neighbour?" Things are changing, and to us, it's clear that we're deeply involved.

Thanks for reading, and may God bless you. ➤

*The We Have Faith Environmental Expedition is a discovery tour hosted by World Renew and the Office of Social Justice, and led by Cal DeWitt, a Christian environmental scientist and teacher. The group traveled through Kenya from April 20 to May 3. You can read about their journey at [volunteerblog.worldrenew.net](http://volunteerblog.worldrenew.net).*

## Make poverty history economics



**Angela Reitsma Bick**

My sister is working on her M.A. in International Development at York University, and we've had a running conversation about the history and effectiveness of international aid.

Essentially, "help" can be defined in three ways. As a verb, your help makes it easier for me to do something (*I'm moving. Can you carry this couch?*).

As a noun, help refers to the assistance you've given (*Thanks for the Tim's gift card*).

Lastly, the imperative – in a crisis, you'll respond instinctively to calls for "Help!" (*My roof fell in*). Most people step up to help those in desperate need; think tsunami, earthquake. It's the other two variations that are harder to sort out. Who needs help? Who's offering it? And what kind works best?

First, some current events: In their 2013 Federal Budget, Conservatives shut down an independent Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) by putting it back under the umbrella of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). In the 45 years that CIDA stood alone, the landscape of aid has changed dramatically. Under the Conservatives, funding to humanitarian assistance is being cut by eight percent, roughly \$300 million from 2012 to 2015.

Does the end of CIDA mean less funding in future for non-government organizations (NGOs)? Will it affect the operation of Christian charities like World Renew? Will aid workers waste time navigating DFAIT – a bigger bureaucratic maze? And if Foreign Affairs is driven economically, can it objectively disperse aid? I called a few people involved with aid organizations in Canada to find out who is worried and who welcomes CIDA's new home.

### Writing on the wall

The merger did not come as a surprise to most NGO operatives. As one source pointed out, announcements on CIDA's website had been linked to the Foreign Affairs website for months before the budget was released. Last November, a House of Commons document called "Driving Inclusive Economic Growth" hinted at the move. In fact, the marriage of international trade, international development work and foreign affairs "has been a long time coming," as Peter VanderZaag, Board member of the International Potato Center, told me.

VanderZaag has been involved in international aid over forty years. In Bangladesh with Mennonite Central Committee in the 70s, a brand-new CIDA would "write [us] a blank cheque," he recalls. But "those days are long gone." The systems of accountability in place today are a good thing. But it would be tragic if a drastic upswing in red tape means that NGOs are rewarded for filling out the right documents on time rather than for effectively delivering aid.

Besides the merger, CIDA's budget is shrinking. There's no question that Canada's capacity to provide short-term and long-term humanitarian aid will be reduced. No one I talked to was willing to say outright that the changes were negative, however – just that they're concerned. Some NGOs will be more affected than others, depending on how much they rely on government funding. With the bulk of its donations coming in privately, World Vision for example is relatively immune. But many organizations, particularly the Canada Foodgrains Bank, have benefitted for years from campaigns where the government matched private donations by as much as four to one. Even smaller organizations have been able to complete ambitious projects overseas with the help of funding from CIDA, which is more consistent than the income from individual donors.

### Trade or aid?

The merger highlights another issue, which is the debate about the best way to alleviate poverty and sustain development around the world. Is it through financial assistance, trickle-down capitalism or a combination? The two methods can be characterized as aid that focuses on development versus a market-based approach that sees economic growth as poverty's antidote. Since the global food crisis in 2007, the U.S. Agency for International Development has emphasized the latter, by inviting the private sector to partner with local agencies to find long-term solutions to chronic problems. Canada seems to be following the U.S. model. A development think tank in London noted that the global Millennium Development Goals

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The paper is published the second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Christian Courier Tel: 905-682-8311  
5 Joanna Dr 1-800-969-4838  
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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.



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## News/Letter

## CC welcomes three new writers

The response to our ad for new writers was inspiring: over 20 people sent in sample material, and the work of any on a regular basis would have strengthened *Christian Courier*. We couldn't make them all columnists, but many have agreed to write News, Features or Reviews. You will see their work in upcoming issues.

Meanwhile, join me in welcoming three new writers into CC's regular rotation – one as Review Editor and two as monthly columnists. We thank everyone who continues to support this vibrant, growing publication. May it bring glory to God. – *Angela Reitsma Bick, Editor*

Review Editor  
Brian Bork

"It's a pleasure to join the *Christian Courier* staff as the Review Editor! A bit about myself: I'm the CRC chaplain at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, where I've spent the past five years encouraging a bunch of aspiring mathematicians and engineers to think theologically. I live in downtown Kitchener, Ont. with my wife Amanda, our two cats and a load of guitars.

"Before I went into ministry I completed an M.A. in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State U. in Ohio. I went there with an interest in American music (jazz, mainly), and came out with a keener sense of just how vital cultural criticism is. I think it fits well with St. Paul's encouragement for us to critically examine everything. While I was there, I felt a call to campus ministry, and enrolled in seminary soon after. My training and vocation have basically made the relationship between theology and culture one of my preoccupations, and I'm so glad to have the opportunity to explore it in my role at the *Christian Courier*!"

New column: *Cross-examining culture*

"I'm a mother, a daughter, a lawyer, a professor, a wife, a sister, a neighbour and a political scientist. My name is **Julia Stronks** and for the last 10 years I have been writing and speaking on what it means to be a citizen who considers that all of life is religion. This column will examine different aspects of culture, through the eyes of faith. I'll write about business practices, the church, gender, education, technology, crime, the law and families.

"I am an American, teaching political science at Whitworth University, a Presbyterian school in Spokane, Washington. My husband, Charles Zandbergen, is Canadian and my extended family lives in British Columbia and Ontario. My father, Bill, has taught me to appreciate all things Dutch. My mother, Gloria, has taught me to collaborate as we worked together to write three books. My son, Matt, has taught me to love sports and my students have taught me how to shoot a rifle and how to tweet. Experiences change our perspective and I look forward to challenging and being challenged by *Christian Courier* readers in the coming months."

New column: *Ambassador*

"I am enjoying my new job in Toronto at the Institute for Christian Studies. My wife, Dawn and I [**Tom Wolthuis**] share the position of President. We are learning a lot about Canada and the Canadian churches. I am a churchman as an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church and a teacher. I recently taught Biblical studies and youth ministry at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa for

almost a decade while also advising a new church, Living Water in Orange City. I enjoyed spending the summer of 2010 teaching at Northrise University in Ndola, Zambia. I have had two other church pastorates in the Grand Rapids area and have also taught at Calvin College, both in religion and communications.

"I will be writing a column called *Ambassador* to explore the relationship of the Christian community and theological and Biblical Studies with society. I plan to explore with my church, teaching, and academic experience how theology helps us live serving God and our neighbour today.

"My wife, Dawn Wolthuis (*née* Hendriksen), an IT professional, has taught at Dordt and Calvin Colleges in Mathematics and Computer Science, and directed Calvin College's computer centre in the early 1990s. We do miss our two daughters, a son-in-law, and two adorable grandchildren, Cady (4) and Levi (2), who are living in the States, but technological communication helps."

Make poverty history economics *continued*

integrate both methods.

Not all development work is equal, however, whether NGO or private sector. (Remember the Tim Horton's card? If you own two hundred Tim's franchises, does that undermine the gift?)

Many corporations market themselves as "socially responsible" these days. The Canadian mining industry – which has received CIDA funding in the past – is a good example.

Extraction companies such as Barrick Gold Co. in Tanzania and Goldcorp Inc. in Mexico promote themselves as doing international development work, maybe because they hire locally, but their primary goal is the approval of their shareholders and not the increased well-being of the communities from which they are extracting resources. In fact, there are documented cases of human rights abuses, unlawful practices and environmental degradation by Canadian mining companies abroad. In a country with weak or corrupt governance, the corporation is king. CIDA – or now, Foreign Affairs – has to keep a sharp eye on which projects its funding supports. Will the federal government, through DFAIT, recognize its responsibility in overseeing Canadian multinationals involved in developing countries?

Let's return to those three definitions of help. In many cases, as VanderZaag points out, the poorest of the poor can't wait for their countries to join a global economy. Their cries for help are in the imperative form. We have to respond, whether on our own or through an organization.

Outside of a crisis, however, it takes discretion to decide whether "help" as a verb (trade) or a noun (aid) is needed.

## Eikelboom responds to 'Science as idol'

I would like to thank Richard Vander Vaart for his comments (Letters, April 22, 2013) on my column "Leading Like Daniel" (March 25, 2013). Serving God by taking on significant public responsibilities in the 21st century is a challenge few Christians have faced. My respect for Francis Collins's willingness to live his faith in a fast-moving, important and health-related area of science is profound. I am not in a position to question his personal walk with our God, but from his public positions I see him as a giant of the Christian faith, who has been attacked because of this faith. Regardless of what we personally feel about his Christian walk and beliefs, the request that we pray for and support Christians in his position is our responsibility as part of Christ's church.

Our increasing understanding of what the Belgic Confession calls General Revelation raises substantial questions about how we understand God's Word and World. The ques-

tion at the heart of Vander Vaart's concern is profound and very important, which I thank him for opening. It is one that Christians who argue for theistic evolution have sometimes been reluctant to admit is on the table. This question is how we understand the message at the very centre of our faith: that God came into his creation in the person of Jesus Christ who lived, died and rose again, with the intent to unite us with himself. In the CRC we have had long painful struggles about gender and office, an arguably much less important issue. The questions raised by scientists today require a much more profound re-evaluation of our Christian worldview. This is a challenge that God calls us to address in this age. I pray that we exhibit the grace and love to address it honestly and openly, recognising that while we may differ in our expression of our faith we all seek to serve our God who loves us, despite our missteps.

Rudy Eikelboom

Thankfully, we don't have to lean on our own understanding. We can talk to local MPs about these concerns. We can read the reports of the organizations we support, and find out more about their approaches and needs. We can pray that effective, established NGOs continue to get the government funding they require. We can listen to those who deserve, those who define and those who deliver help. ➤

*Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of Christian Courier. She's grateful to the people who answered her questions, especially Peter VanderZaag – who is communicating with her from India. Along with the CIP Board, he's strategizing how to enhance impact amongst the world's poor with healthy potatoes and nutritious, orange-flesh sweet potatoes.*

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**Address all correspondence to:** 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1

Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838

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## News

## Holy Spirit 'moved like a wind' at CRC prayer summit

BURLINGTON, Ontario (CRCNA) – Canadians Andrew Van Benthem and Henry Van Ramhorst stood praying across the street from the trailer park in Sunland, California. It was the second day of the Christian Reformed Church's 2013 "Prayer Summit."

Van Benthem and Van Ramhorst were taking part in a prayer walk that led them through the small community of modest homes and businesses in the foothills near All Nations Church, the congregation in Lake View Terrace where the summit was occurring. About 20 people were participating in the prayer walk, which was one of several events that occurred as part of summit.

The Summit drew some 500 people from all over Canada and the U.S. Participants experienced times of intense prayer, plenary speeches and presentations, as well as seminars and events such as the prayer walk.

"Lord, we pray for the people who live in this trailer park and we want to bring whatever concerns are on their minds and in their lives before you," said Van Benthem, an elder at Good News Fellowship CRC in Winnipeg.

The trailer park was a mixture of permanent trailers and vacation homes. The neon sign in front of the park was broken. But flowers bloomed on the grounds, the streets were landscaped and well swept, and people were bustling about.

"Lord, we ask for your spirit to be with these people today. We ask especially that those who don't know you will come to know you," said Van Ramhorst, who attends Hope CRC in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

### Prayer in many forms

The prayer walk reflected the many types of prayer that were explained and promoted as part of a three-day summit. Apart from the prayer walk, all presentations and activities took place on the campus of the nearby church.

Types of prayer that were discussed and practiced as part of the summit's theme, "Your Kingdom Come," included intercessory prayer, early-morning Korean-style prayer, silent prayer, prayers of petition and lament, and specifically prayer calling forth the Kingdom of God.

This was the second year for the CRC's Prayer Summit, the first



Rev. Joel Boot, CRC Executive Director, on his knees at All Nations Church.



The Summit provides inspiration for new ways to pray at home and in home churches.

of which took place a year ago in April at the church in Lake View Terrace.

As part of this year's summit people in 40 locations across North America and abroad joined in as Andrew Van Benthem and Henry Van Ramhorst prayed across from the trailer park. As they left the site Van Benthem and Van Ramhorst said that they were glad they had come to the summit. It provided added incentive to continue praying once they returned home, they said, as well as inspirational ideas about how to better pray, both in their own lives and corporately in their churches. "I like this idea of prayer walking, too. This is something that we can do in the neighborhood right around our church," said Van Ramhorst.

Rev. Tom Swierenga, a Wyoming, Michigan pastor, who organized the prayer walk, waited as everyone returned from praying on the streets. Standing next to the

bus that had brought them there, he asked the pray-ers to discuss how things went. Everyone agreed that it had gone fine. Some people had prayed with people on the streets, and in one case at a bus stop, while others simply prayed in front of residences and businesses.

### Jesus walking with us

Swierenga said he hoped that those who went on the prayer walk realized that prayer walking need not take place in an outside location. "We hope to take this practice into our own lives. And when we are prayer walking, even in our own lives, it is wise to keep our eyes open to all of the opportunities that are right there in front of us," he said.

Swierenga also spoke about the significance and special qualities of this type of prayer. "When we engage in prayer walking, we are entering into a relationship with people we encounter, or even

## Britain: Critics elicit reform of 'unjust' free-speech law

Marian Van Til, with files from CTI, parliament.uk, F211

LONDON (TCI) – The long-awaited free-speech reform of Section 5 of Britain's Public Order Act has achieved Royal Assent. That means that Britons will no longer be arrested and charged merely for using words that some other individual finds "insulting."

The meaning of "insulting" was open to interpretation and led to many unjust incidents of police interfering with free speech, say critics. Christians were particularly being singled out by "over-zealous police officers" who have used the law "to silence legitimate activity, like protestors calling Scientology a cult or Christians engaging in street preaching," say those critics. In another example, a student was arrested for calling a police horse "gay."

In its current form the law contains no requirement that the person bringing the accusation prove that harm has been caused, or even that there was any intent to cause harm. So the police may – and do – arrest and charge a person simply for using words that another person finds offensive. A well-known British blogger also asserts that "the existence of section 5 of the POA 1986 is a constant threat to those who speak out against Islamic culture and Islamic morality."

### Political wrangling now over

The reformed law will still allow the police to deal with "abusive" and "threatening" public order offenses. Although reform of Section 5 was agreed by the British Parliament some time ago, it was put in jeopardy because it was caught up by political wrangling over press regulation. But now that it has cleared Parliament and achieved Royal Assent, it is expected to come into force later this year.

The reform drew support from a diverse group of Britons. The Christian Institute, a non-denominational charity which "exists for the furtherance and promotion of the Christian religion in the United Kingdom, and for the advancement of education," was one of the groups that worked hard to change the law. The campaign was also strongly supported by the National Secular Society and the Peter Tatchell Foundation (a human rights organization), among others. In addition, famous comedic actor Rowan Atkinson supported the reform with a speech to MPs. A particular advocate of the revised law in the House of Lords was Baron Geoffrey Dear, a former Chief Constable who led the fight there. Lord Dear said, "I'd like now to work constructively with police forces, helping them to understand the way the law has been reformed and the implications for free speech."

Many British Christians had contacted their MPs urging them to back the reform of Section 5. It was that "grassroots activism" that was crucial to changing the law, said a Christian Institute spokesperson. ➤



"We must be free to insult each other," Atkinson says.

simply the neighbourhoods in the areas [where] walk," he said. "When we walk, we envision Jesus walking with us, and we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is first a conversation in which we asked the Holy Spirit to show us how to pray."

On the final day of the summit, Rev. Moses Chung also spoke about the Holy Spirit. "It is clear that the Holy Spirit has been mov-

ing like a wind, and maybe he has been moving in your lives like a fire," said Chung, one of the organizers of the summit. "Whatever the case, we have been here like a family. We have been able to open our hearts and wounds, to the church and of ourselves, to whatever's broken in the world and to pray for others and ourselves as well." ➤



## News

## Pope Francis: 'The church is not an NGO'



Pope Francis kisses the foot of one of the 12 inmates whose feet he washed in Rome in April.

ROME (CCO/AsiaNews) – The Catholic Church is a “love story,” not an organization, Pope Francis told a congregation with whom he celebrated Mass last month.

In his homily the Pope repeated a warning which he has issued several times since his election: the church must not be perceived as an NGO – a non-governmental organization (i.e., a privately run, possibly bureaucratic charity). Francis further decried the tendency to “make offices and become somewhat bureaucratic.”

Noting that staff members from the Vatican bank and the Institute for Religious Works (IOR) were in the congregation, Francis clarified that he was not suggesting a move to abandon all offices. “Some things are necessary; offices are required. OK!” he said. “But they are necessary up to a certain point: as an aid to this love story. But when organization takes first place, love falls down and the church, poor thing, becomes an NGO. And this is not the way forward.”

The Pope’s reference to the IOR was particularly noteworthy because some Vatican officials anticipate that the pontiff will seek major changes in the Vatican bank, and may even eliminate it entirely. The Pope has not yet given any clear indication of his practical plans for the bank. ➤

## Rise in Taliban attacks worries Pakistani Christians

LAHORE, Pakistan (CCO) – Pakistan’s Christians are deeply concerned about a surge of Taliban attacks ahead of the Pakistani presidential election, which was to be held May 11, according to a Dominican priest. The attacks include the April 11 murder of Fakhru Islam, a candidate who called for a more secular state.

“We are very concerned about this wave of violence,” said Father James Channan, director of the Center for Peace in Lahore. “The attacks are aimed at creating tension and instability and threaten the painstakingly built democratic system in Pakistan, perhaps trying to postpone the vote. In addition there is disdain towards the vision of human dignity, human rights and peaceful coexistence which are the foundations of civilized life.”

The appeal of the Christian community is “for peaceful, transparent elections, where people can express themselves freely,” said Channan, and for “values such as equality, democracy, citizenship, religious freedom, harmony,” to be respected in political and social life.”

Among the serious attacks in recent days, a suicide bombing at a meeting of the Awami National Party in Peshawar killed 16 people; an attack hit the convoy of Sanaullah Zehri, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League in Baluchistan, causing three deaths; Fakhru Islam, candidate of the Muttahida Quami Movement party was killed by two gunmen in Hyderabad. ➤



Gunmen took the life of this Presidential candidate who called for a more secular state.

## U.S.: The ‘uncovered evil’ that’s not making headlines

Marian Van Til, with files from LSN, PolicyMic, USA Today, CrossWalk  
Please note: this article contains graphic descriptions.

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania – There is a deeply disturbing murder trial going on in the U.S. that the major media outlets have tried their best to avoid. Abortionist Kermit Gosnell is on trial for grotesquely murdering babies born alive after illegal late-term abortions, and for causing the deaths of two pregnant women seeking abortions. But it was only after an outcry from the public who had learned of the trial through internet blogs and alternative news sources, and a pointedly critical, widely read column by a pro-choice journalist, that some of the media were shamed into covering the trial.

Kirsten Powers, writing in the national paper *USA Today*, called out her fellow mainstream, pro-choice journalists for ignoring the trial. “Infant beheadings. Severed baby feet in jars. A child screaming after it was delivered alive during an abortion procedure. Haven’t heard about these sickening accusations?”

“It’s not your fault,” wrote Powers. “Since the murder trial of . . . Kermit Gosnell began March 18, there has been precious little coverage of the case that should be on every news show and front page. The revolting revelations of Gosnell’s former staff, who have been testifying to what they witnessed and did during late-term abortions, should shock anyone with a heart.”

Powers asserted that coverage or non-coverage of the trial is not a pro-choice versus pro-life issue. “Butchering babies that were already born and were older than the state’s 24-week limit for abortions is the story. . . . Let me state the obvious. This should be front page news. . . . You don’t have to oppose abortion rights to find late-term abortion abhorrent or to find the Gosnell trial eminently newsworthy. This is not about being ‘pro-choice’ or ‘pro-life.’ It’s about basic human rights. The deafening silence of too much of the media, once a force for justice in America, is a disgrace.”

The White House has also refused to comment on the trial. Barack Obama, the most extreme “pro-choice” president the U.S. has seen, was, as a state senator from Illinois, the only one who consistently voted against bills that would require saving the lives of infants born alive during abortions.

### Self-imposed gag order

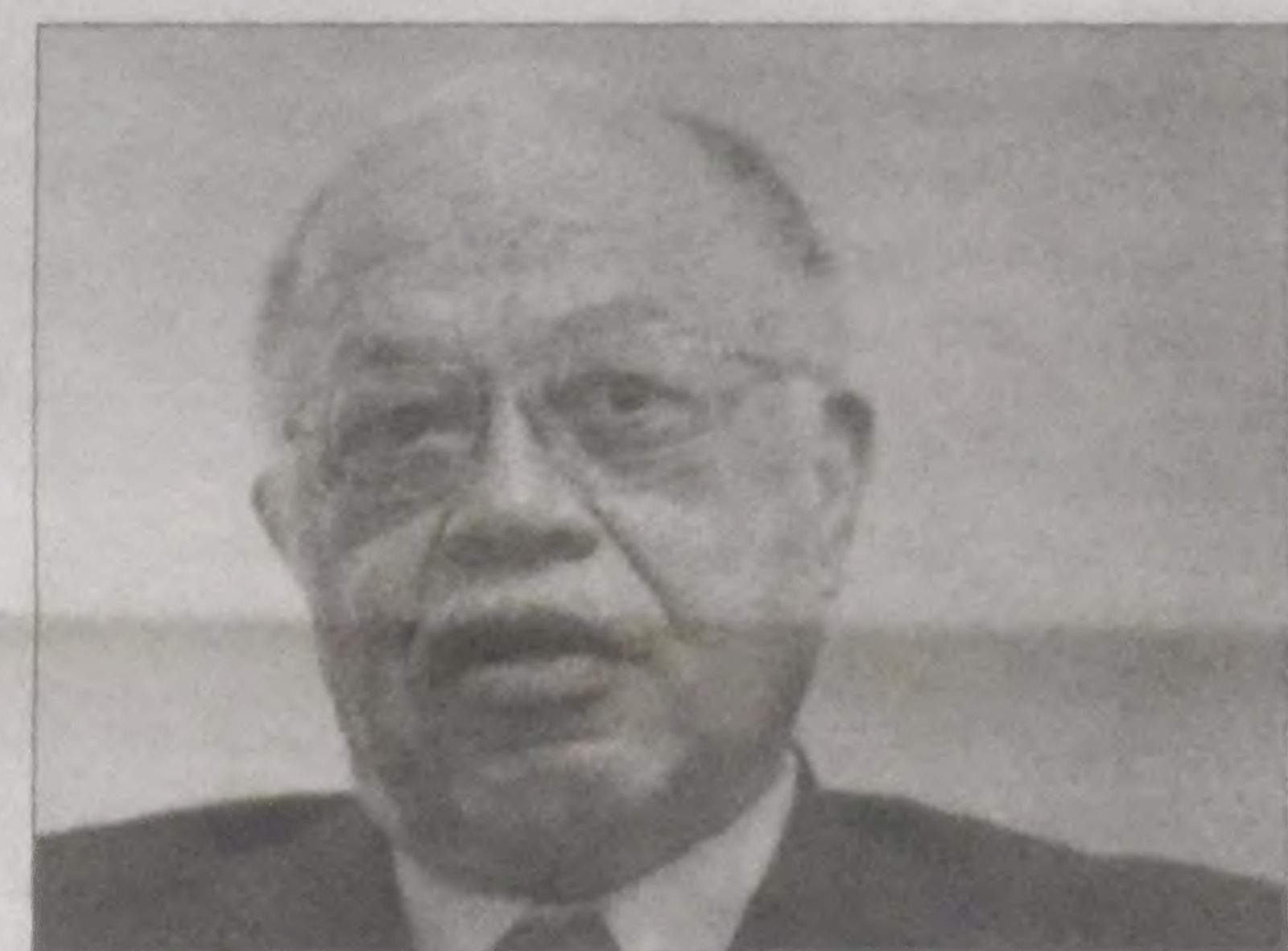
Some mainstream reporters admitted they weren’t covering the trial because they couldn’t stomach it. Others insisted that the real issue was not torturous baby (they say “fetal”) deaths but the desperation of the women seeking abortions, justifying abortions at taxpayer expense.

Others clearly didn’t like the implications against, and the inevitable rethinking of, abortion that has already arisen from the trial. Another issue swept under the rug was the fact that Gosnell is black and was routinely killing black babies born alive and treating their financially strapped mothers in filthy conditions with unsanitary instruments – all for the money.

“He finally grew so greedy, crazed and callous he simply induced labour and then killed the babies,” reports the website PolicyMic. “He earned an estimated \$1.8 million a year from performing



“This is not about being pro-choice or pro-life,” Powers argues. “It’s about basic human rights.”



Gosnell stands accused of multiple counts of feticide, committed at his clinic (above).

abortions three nights a week at the clinic, and much more from prescribing [the narcotic painkiller] Oxycontin and other drugs. He was ‘one of the top three prescribers of Oxycontin in the state,’ according to the Grand Jury report.” He was writing 1,900 prescriptions a month, according to a separate DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) report.

The trial details that have emerged from clinic employees – one of whom was only 15 years old – are so demonically barbaric as to be beyond belief in a “civilized” society. Yet in the middle of that horror some good is arising, says Jim Daly, president of the evangelical group Focus on the Family.

Daly wrote at CrossWalk.com, “In the midst of the darkness there is good news when it comes to the growing public opposition to abortion. The press may support it, but more and more people do not. Thankfully, those who would commit, support and hide these atrocious acts are in the minority. Bolstered by ultrasound technology that brings the reality of life within the womb to our eyes, more and more people are holding to a pro-life worldview. The younger generation is more pro-life than the one that preceded it. . . . As we think about what’s happening today, let’s cling to the good news that truth will ultimately be made known. Evil will be uncovered. Eyes will be opened. Voices will be heard. And God’s heart for innocent children will be known.” ➤



## Columns

## Beautiful and broken

Lisa Van Engen

Pinterest has exploded into one of the most popular networking sites on the internet. Users can “pin” theme-based image collections and share these images with other users. The website acts as a way to bookmark articles, images and interests into your own unique space.

Women use Pinterest avidly. We pin outfit combinations, fingernail art, home decorating ideas, bucket list images, enticing food recipes, scrapbooking templates and parenting tips. Users network with those who possess like interests and share knowledge and discoveries.

Images fill the computer screen of glossy and beautiful people, places and homes. We long for beauty, marking and archiving it in order to copy it into our own lives. Beauty stirs up something deep inside us, a longing to be more.

Along with the beauty we also long for a meaningful life. We must freely admit that sometimes life is not always beautiful images, one right after another. The world itself is broken and we, its people, also find brokenness in our daily lives.

In the book *Beyond the Beautiful Forever*, author Katherine Boo writes about Annawadi, a makeshift settlement that co-exists with luxury high-rises near a Mumbai airport. The disparity of wealth shocks when placed side-by-side.



*Pinterest can mimic a Mumbai landscape: great beauty (online) juxtaposed with the brokenness of our (real) lives.*

Pinterest sometimes takes on this landscape. Beside the beautiful images are photographs of people and places desperate for renewal.

Those images are a Biblical truth that beautiful coexists with broken: David is a man after God's own heart and also a sinner; Rahab is in the lineage of Jesus and also a prostitute; the apostle Paul once a persecutor of the church.

## A longing for more

Focusing on images that only display beauty can leave us empty. They remind us of what our dinner table should be filled with, what our house could look like and how our bodies should be shaped and clothed. The beautiful images offer us a distraction from the reality of what our lives really look like – a perfectly decorated living space with all the dirt swept beneath the couch. They are a distraction from what the world displays; they are the crystal blue waters of the Caribbean with drugs traded on the shoreline.

## Overheard

“I just spent the entire day on Pinterest and now I hate my laundry room, my garden, my colour palette, my husband, my kids, my clothes, my linen closet, my dog, my parakeet, my fingernails, the books I read, the vacations I take, the food I make and also I still can't braid hair.”

Wherever we are we can do this: spread the hope we have in Christ, share images of organizations that fight for justice, offer stories of the redeemed. We should do this with vulnerable hearts, for we too belong among the redeemed.

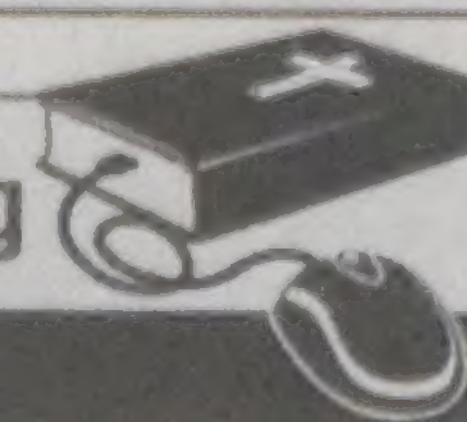
The veneer of perfection erodes hope, for it is unattainable. The honest longing for renewal brings joy to God and hope to hurting hearts. ➤

Lisa Van Engen writes at [aboutproximity.com](http://aboutproximity.com), encouraging others to place themselves in the proximity of renewal. She lives with her husband and two children in Michigan.



## Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman



## Better off?

In his book *Better Off*, author Eric Brende describes an experiment in which he and his wife move to a remote Amish community for 18 months. The book is a fascinating reflection on living without the aid of modern technology. Brende's conclusion is that although technology makes things easier, life might be preferable with less technology. In fact, might there be some optimal level of technology below which life is too difficult, but above which we begin to lose some things that are important?

A thoughtful approach to technology asks not only what we gain from a particular technology, but also what we might lose. The question about what we gain from a new technology is often easy to identify. The cell phone gives us a flexible and convenient access to communication, e-mail enables us to stay in touch with friends and contact around the world, and social networking allows us to follow developments in the lives of our circle of “friends.” Discerning what we may lose with technology is much more challenging. However, on some occasions these things become more evident.

For example, the advantages of an automatic dishwasher are clear (pun intended). It is unthinkable to suggest we might be losing anything by using a dishwasher (except dishpan hands). When our dishwasher recently stopped working properly, however, something wonderful happened. Rather than shovelling the dishes into the dishwasher and scurrying away after dinner, we were forced to spend time together. Parent and child shared time and space while the dishes were washed and dried, and had delightful conversations in the process.

## Love the one you're with

Other times, what we lose only becomes apparent after introducing a new technology into our lives. The smartphone is one such a technology that that brings many possibilities. But what do we lose? I was recently observing my daughter's swimming lesson and I glanced at the other parents around me. About half of them were watching small glowing rectangles in their hands rather than watching their children. I eventually succumbed and quickly checked my own smartphone after noticing the recreation centre had free wi-fi access available. The ubiquitous connectivity of the smartphone can pull us away from being present and aware of the places and people that surround us.

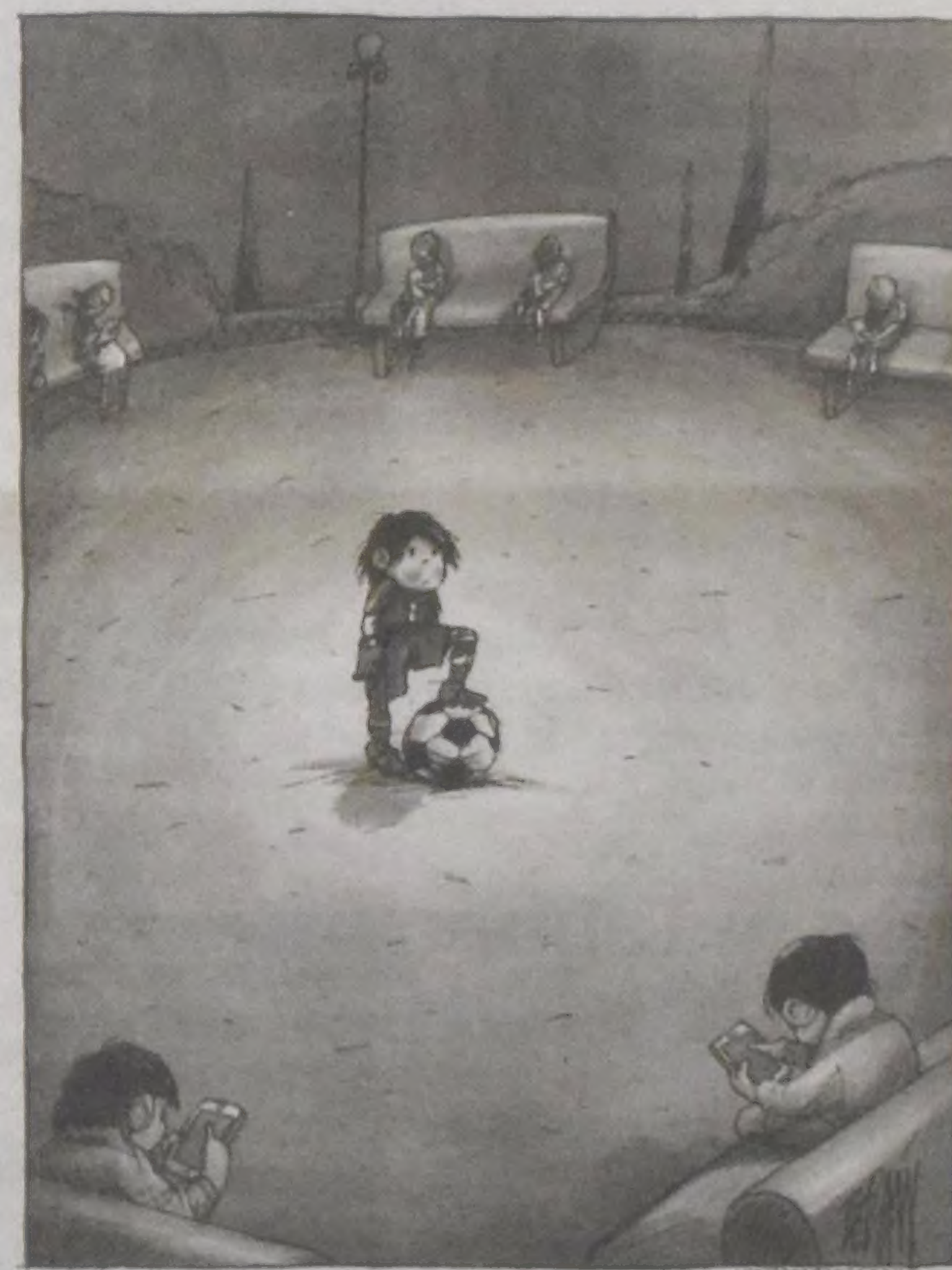
As a teacher, I have observed these issues in the classroom. The introduction of laptops and tablets into the classroom ideally provide opportunities for taking notes and consulting online resources during a lecture. However, the reality I have found is that we also lose something: the attention of some students distracted by social networking, videos and games during class. This distraction can easily spread to other students who are distracted by flickering screens nearby.

But some technologies are hard to live without. As I write this, Redeemer University College has struggled with a power failure that has lasted several days now. Initially, the water supply to the campus was also interrupted. Power, running water and sewage systems are virtually a necessity. As a result of the outage, Redeemer was forced to cancel classes. As I write, a hastily delivered generator is now powering our campus, allowing classes, exams and regular activities to continue.

Perhaps it is true: there is some level of technology below which life becomes too difficult, but above which we might lose things that are important. Rather than rejecting modern technology, maybe there are ways to reclaim some of the things we might be losing. Perhaps I should consider occasionally hand-washing dishes with my children and put limits on what my smartphone can pre-empt. Maybe I should ask students to occasionally set their laptops aside, and introduce classroom activities that force students to engage with each other.

Rather than moving to a rural Amish community, we should give thanks for running water and electricity. At the same time, we may want to consider reclaiming some of the things that we may be losing by changing the way we use some of our modern tools and devices. ➤

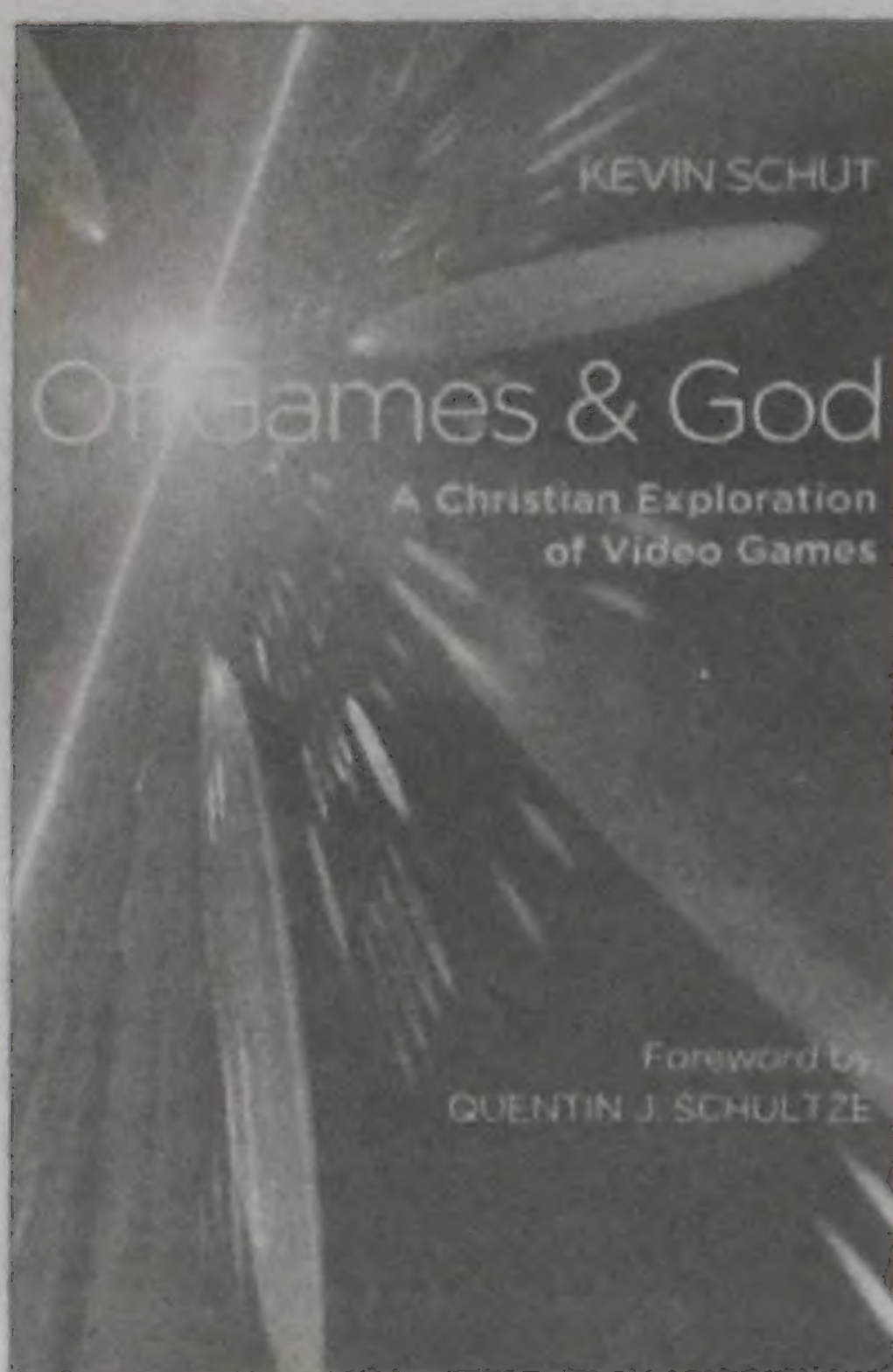
Derek Schuurman ([dschuur@cs.redeemer.ca](mailto:dschuur@cs.redeemer.ca)) is a computer science professor at Redeemer University College. He is the author of a new book, *Shaping a Digital World*, published by InterVarsity Press and forthcoming in June.



*Soccer: there's an app for that.*



## Reviews



**Of Games & God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games**  
by Kevin Schut, foreword by  
Quentin J. Schultze, Brazos Press,  
Grand Rapids, Mich., 2013, 206 pp.

Monty Python even helped push him where he is. If reviewing is my punishment, bring it on!

Despite its almost pretentious title, *Of Games & God* is a worthy, possibly pioneering Christian effort to examine critically the impact of video games on 21st century life. Schut always offers carefully researched perspectives on gaming culture. I never believed anyone could demystify the gaming world for me, but Professor Schut has. Worse, though, his book has awakened my shameful coveting of cheap, used games and a joystick.

Schut opens with a compelling and brief analysis of video games in the history of technology. Not surprisingly, Christians are still asking the same spiritual-ethical questions that believers have since people began using tools: How are technologies (or video games) compatible with our faith? Can we use technologies (or video games) to talk about God?

Using finely-honed dialectical processes he documents extreme positions on each side. Schut then takes convincing and thoughtful middle positions. Throughout he laces his arguments with biblical and theological themes that inform the issues.

For example, Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle condemns video games:

## Balancing in the middle without riding the fence

**James C. Dekker**

In the interest of full disclosure, maybe I shouldn't review this book. My video game experience slithers among Minesweeper (third level), Spider Solitaire, Freecell and Yeti Sports (PB – 321 feet). Also, I have known Kevin Schut since 1986 as his pastor in Edmonton.

Best memory: Ten years later I performed his wedding ceremony. Most aggravating: For five years, Kevin, his siblings and my three daughters squeezed (now illegally) into his parents' van or our '77 Chevy for countless seven kilometer pilgrimages to West Edmonton Christian School.

Infinity is close to the number of times I threatened Kevin with dismemberment or worse. What better doom could suit a teen who endlessly recited Monty Python skits verbatim at 8:15 a.m.? He was always the ring-leader of the gang trying to destroy Western Civilization in the backseat. Could any good come of that boy?

Yet this young associate professor at Trinity Western University has made me eat crow, gladly! Maybe

"They're just stupid." Schut juxtaposes Driscoll to Jane McGonigal's triumphalist position. Her book *Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* brashly trumpets her opinion.

After analyzing all extremes – always with self-deprecating wit and scholarly thoroughness – Schut judges none. Instead he offers this varied argument for each issue: "On the one hand video games can mess up our minds," though on the other they can excellently stimulate "new ways of creating imaginary places and spaces."

That might sound like Garrison Keillor's decades-old caricature of indecisive, earth-tone-clothed, Birkenstock-shod Minnesotan Lutheran pastors. Yet time and again Schut wisely veers from such wimpiness. When, for example, he illumines video game-related threats such as addiction, escapism, violence, unsocial behaviour, excessive and exploitive sexuality that demeans women, he never condemns. Instead this scholar and life-long gamer always lays a firm foundation for Christian discernment.

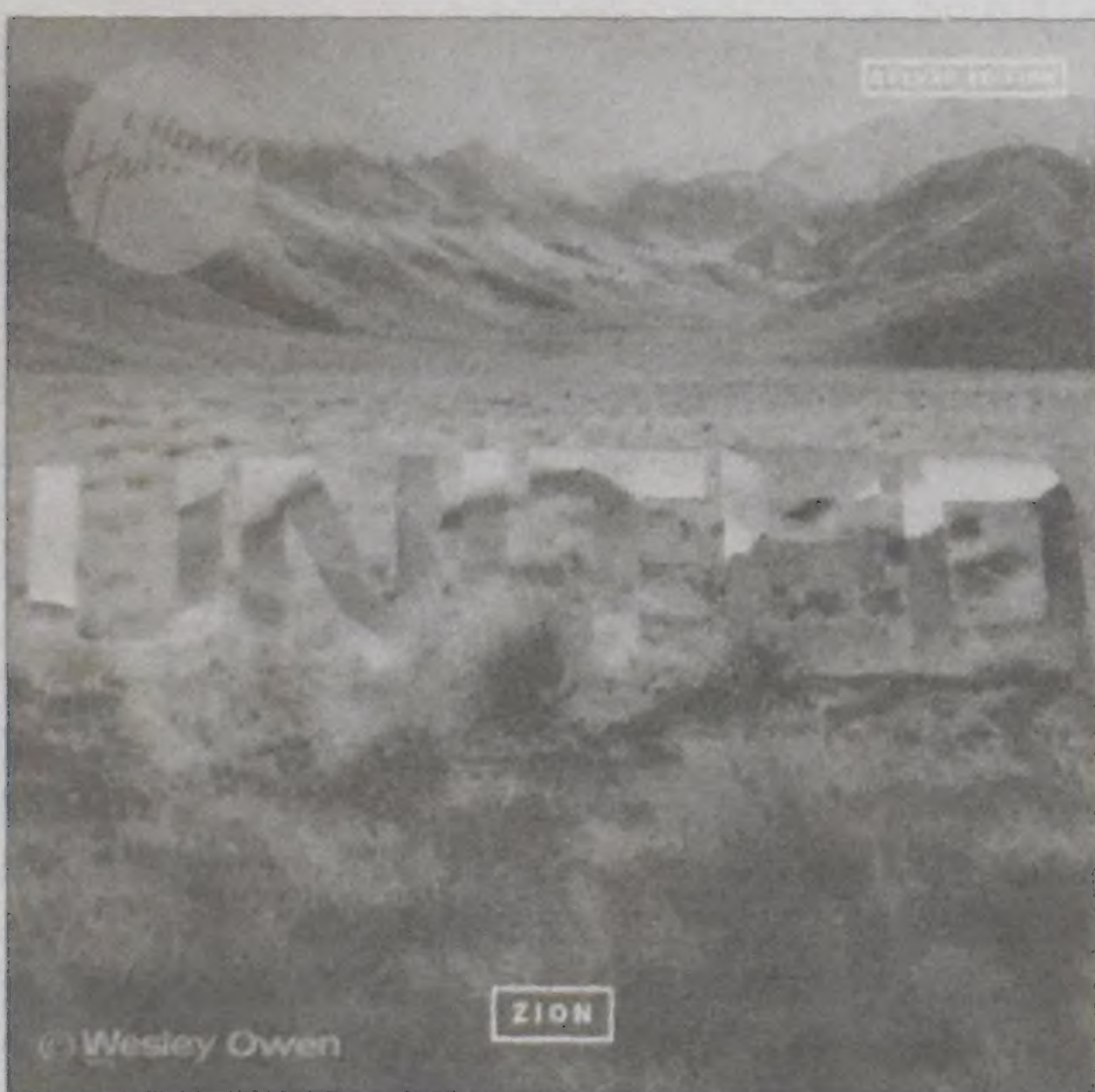
Consistently, though not predictably, Schut rings the changes on this plea: "We certainly need this specific discussion [of video games as either learning tools or dangerous traps], but the larger issue is how we manage and use technology."

If there is a weak thread woven through the book, it's Schut's insistence that thoughtfulness is required to make sound spiritual choices about playing and designing video games. But that's utopian. Sure, Schut regularly and ably finds "traces of God in the most unexpected back alleys of the very real Lagos and the virtual Liberty City." I would expect no less from a studied descendant of Martin Luther, John Calvin and Abraham Kuyper. Such rigorous efforts, though, are far from most gamers' minds, as he admits several times. Here the clichéd proverb "Lead a horse to water . . ." shows again the hoary and wide gap between "town and gown."

That notwithstanding, this is a fine book. As far as I know, it goes where no one has dared go before. Schut traces an exacting, personal, brief, witty and attractively readable journey, always elucidating video games' major cultural influences in our homes and lives. Brazos Press has published a well-edited, intelligently organized, attractively packaged work. The glossary following the text notes is a must for neophytes. If I hadn't had it close at hand, I'd still think that RPG means "rocket-propelled grenade" rather than. . .

Never mind. Go buy or borrow the book if you don't know an MMO from an RPG. But as for me and my wallet, I'm heading to a used-game store before closing time to find Dragon Age. ➤

*James C. Dekker is nearly retired pastor of Covenant CRC, St. Catharines. After June 30 he vows to finish at least six half-done house projects and also learn some real gaming.*



**Zion** by Hillsong UNITED, Hillsong Music Australia, 2013.

My generation, for good and for ill, is much less resistant to the messy work of religious overhaul, to use a crude term. The shift in sound of Hillsong United's latest album, as result, has been received largely as a welcome expression of evolving musical artistry. While some critics have questioned whether or not the band is mimicking recent industry trends, front man Joel Houston argues that the album's electronic influence and reworked New-Wave sound are simply the product of faithful efforts to worship in a changing cultural context.

In a recent interview with the long-running publication CCM, he explains, "I think we have always set out to write songs and create musical expression that is almost uncomfortable in its uniqueness. Not for the sake of progression, or to keep pace with whatever the trends say, but simply because I feel like it's an essential aspect of what I believe worship is."

Sixteen albums in, the band has seen its share of changes. Founded in 1998, the group began as a ministry of the now-massive Hillsong Church in Australia. The Pentecostal congregation has today extended to include sites in London, Stockholm, Cape Town,

## Stepping forward, vaguely: Hillsong United's Zion

**Nick Schuurman**

One of the many tensions we work out in the fear and trembling of our lives as congregations is the process of dealing with cultural change. We share a faith that is founded on unshifting truths, yet has always been situated in particular historical contexts. We are, as result, left with the difficult work of sorting through a multitude of potentially divisive questions. Should we stick with King James? Do drums have a place in front of the pews? How appropriate would direct deposit tithing be?

**No United record would be complete without three or four ringing anthems**

Kiev and New York, as well as an international school of worship arts in Sydney. While many of the band's songs continue to be written for the movement's founding community, Hillsong United has evolved far beyond their Australian roots to something of a global phenomenon. The growing influence of one of the fastest-growing branches of the Christian church, along with the increased popularity of contemporary music, has contributed to their success on tour and on the billboard chart.

Be it a studio album or a live performance, no United record would be complete without three or four ringing anthems, whose lyrics eventually find their way through countless congregations' digital projectors. *Zion* is, despite the more aggressive tempo that marks much of the album, of no exception. The song "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)" features a moving, albeit unfortunately allegorized expression of faith that parallels the apostle Peter's attempt to step out of the boat. "Your grace abounds in deepest waters," sings Taya Smith, "Your sovereign hand will be my guide."

Lyrical artistry has never been a strength for the band. While it is perhaps unfair to the effort that actually went into writing the songs, these 13 tracks read like they were written on napkins when held up next to a hymn book. While the artists' sincerity cannot be questioned, much of *Zion*'s songs are composed of breathy, though admittedly poetic, sentence fragments. Take, for example, these lines from the song "Mercy, Mercy": "Heaven's story / Breathing life into my bones / Spirit lift me / From this wasteland lead me home."

There is a certain simplicity to the words, and I am all for any creative expression that effectively points people to Christ. In a context of increased biblical illiteracy, however, where the basic narrative of our faith seems to be all but forgotten (let alone the solid, theological truths that have historically grounded the church), it all just seems a bit vague. For anyone who has listened to the band before, *Zion* will definitely be a step in a entirely new musical direction. If this is your first introduction to Hillsong United, however, I would recommend listening to one of their earlier, live albums instead. ➤

*Nick Schuurman (schuurman.nick@gmail.com) lives in Cambridge, Ont. and studies at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton.*





## Features

# Save the Mothers: God's love and justice in action

**Sonya VanderVeen Feddema**

All humanity has this in common – mothers give birth to children. But that's where the similarity in women's and children's experiences around the globe often ends. Though in North America maternal mortality is almost unheard of, in other parts of the world it is common. *Christian Courier* interviewed Patricia Paddey, Communications Director with Save the Mothers (STM), to find out what that organization is doing to make pregnancy and childbirth a safe passage to a healthy life instead of a death sentence. The founder of STM, Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese, is an obstetrician and director of the International Women's Health Program at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., where she teaches from May to August each year. She and her family reside in Uganda for the other eight months where she teaches STM's Master of Public Health Leadership (MPHL) program at Uganda Christian University (UCU).

## Why was Dr. Jean, as she is known in Africa, motivated to establish STM?

Jean is a woman of great intelligence and skill, but she is also a woman of great faith and heart. Her love for God and her belief that God cares deeply for the poor and about injustice were significant motivating factors in establishing STM. As a volunteer with the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada, and the Association of Obstetricians of Uganda, she discovered many of the causes of maternal death went far beyond mere medical barriers.

## Why are so many African women dying needlessly during pregnancy and childbirth?

Unfortunately the reasons are complex. Fifteen percent of all pregnancies anywhere will result in life-threatening complications. But in the developing world, having a baby will be the riskiest thing a woman will do. Yet, in most cases, mothers there deliver without any skilled attendant. Often, only their mother-in-law is present. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, a woman has a lifetime risk of one in 39 of dying from pregnancy-related complications. Globally, an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths occurred in 2010. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia accounted for 85 percent of the global burden (245,000 maternal deaths) in 2010. In Canada we lose about 10 to 15 mothers each year. In Uganda, a country with a population roughly the same size as Canada, 6000 mothers die annually. One in four women who die during childbirth simply bleeds to death. This can often be prevented by a medication that costs less than 99 cents.

One in four births is to an adolescent mother. Teen moms are often not physiologically ready to give birth. Serious complications can result.

Dr. Jean speaks of three delays that lead to mothers dying: the delay in making the decision to go to the hospital (many women try to birth their child at home because they cannot afford the costs associated with going to the hospital); the delay in getting to an adequately equipped healthcare facility (roads are terrible in Uganda; it can take hours or even days to get to a health centre equipped to handle obstetric emergencies); and the delay in receiving appropriate medical care once at the health care facility.

During my recent trip to Uganda, I visited Mulago Hospital, a large, government-run facility in the capital

city of Kampala. I'll never forget the face of one young woman I saw there. She was in the post-natal intensive care unit. She was dying. She had started her labour at home. When she realized something was wrong, she went to the local health facility. They realized she needed an emergency C-section, but were not able to do it there, and so they referred her to Mulago. By the time she arrived at Mulago, her uterus had ruptured. She had emergency surgery to remove her now dead baby, and her tattered reproductive organs, but she'd lost so much blood, her blood refused to clot and she continued to bleed. She needed a transfusion, but the hospital didn't have any blood supplies in order to transfuse her. She was 25, and already a mother of five other little ones.



*Dr. Florence Mirembe and Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese, co-founders of the Save the Mothers program in Uganda.*

## Does STM have to overcome social and cultural barriers to attain its objectives?

Absolutely! There are too many to name them all. There are things like the lack of infrastructure (good roads, running water, etc.); acute poverty (86 percent of Ugandans survive on subsistence farming alone; there simply isn't money to spare); social differences that lead to a cultural acceptance of women dying in childbirth (the attitude that "it was just her time to die"); familial structures (women don't necessarily have a say in their own health care; they may have to wait for their husband's permission, or the permission of their mother-in-law, to

go to a hospital and such permission may not be forthcoming because of the associated costs involved).

When I was in Uganda, I heard about one woman who went to the hospital to deliver her eighth child. After the baby was born, she sent word to her husband to sell a goat to pay for the hospital bill and for her own transportation home. The money never came. She finally found a stranger to pay her bill. Arriving home, she found her husband had taken another wife, and he insisted she and her eight children leave.

Much, much work remains. Changing a culture doesn't happen overnight. It could take a generation or more.

## What are the social implications of widespread maternal deaths?

I met a man in Uganda whose mother died in childbirth when he was only three years old. His father took another wife who didn't want to raise another woman's child. He was kicked out of the house at four years old. He lived on the streets, and survived by his wits until, by God's grace, a kind stranger found him and took him in. He's now in the STM program. Why? He wants to prevent other children from having to experience the kind of emotional deprivation he lived with for much of his childhood.

In the words of Sarah Brown, wife of the former prime minister of the UK, "When you save a mother's life, you save the best person to raise her children, feed, clothe, vaccinate, and educate them, and also contribute to her community, her economy, her environment. Save the mothers, and you can save the world."

## Tell us a bit more about the logistics of the STM program in Uganda.

Dr. Froese worked together with Ugandans Dr. Florence Mirembe, Dr. Pious Okong, and Olive Sentumbwe-Mugisa to found STM. To date, 250 students have come through the program. They have come from across East



*A woman labours at Kawolo hospital.*

Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Kenya, etc.) and from a wide array of backgrounds – law, politics, media, education, health care, social services and the faith community.

## What's required to attain a degree in MPHL?

The STM program looks for qualified individuals who have completed an undergraduate Bachelor's degree, and who are currently employed within their profession or field of training. The program is modular – students attend classes for three weeks, three times a year over a two-year period, allowing them to continue to practice their profession while they study. They complete the program with an intensive research/study/outreach project that challenges them to re-enter their sphere of influence and prove that their new knowledge and skills will make a positive difference.

## STM has launched innovative practical strategies designed to create change now. Can you tell us about the Mother Friendly Hospital Initiative (MFHI)?

The MFHI is an initiative of Save the Mothers designed to help Ugandan hospitals improve their standards of care. We are currently in the pilot phase of this program by testing it at four different hospitals. Through the MFHI, STM graduates work with hospital administrators and staff – assessing, recommending and implementing changes, then monitoring the outcomes and progress in improving maternal and newborn services. From simple changes, such as adding privacy curtains to the delivery room, replacing 40-year old operating room beds, and ensuring hospitals have access to running water, the MFHI is delivering change by bringing about social transformation in hospitals so that mothers are treated with dignity and respect.

## What steps can Christians take to promote maternal health care throughout the world?

Learn more about the issues by checking out the following STM social media links: [savethemothers.org](http://savethemothers.org), [facebook.com/SavetheMothers](https://facebook.com/SavetheMothers), Twitter: [@stm\\_canada](https://twitter.com/stm_canada), and [linkedin.com/company/save-the-mothers](https://linkedin.com/company/save-the-mothers). Educate yourself and others. Help to spread awareness surrounding the issues that lead to mothers dying needlessly. Then pray. Ask God what he would have you do to help address this injustice – women dying simply because of where they live – that must grieve his heart. If you are able, give financially to help the work carry on.



*Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf55@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ont.*



## Features

# Midwifery: compassionate care

Natasha Moes

When you think about it, childbirth is something that has had a dramatic effect on your life. It's a process necessary for everyone's existence. Yet most of us pay little attention to issues surrounding childbearing, childbirth and the care of mothers and infants. For a topic that affects us all so profoundly, it's perplexing how infrequently we consider issues surrounding these processes. In fact, we often take them for granted. In honour of Mother's Day, maybe it's time to talk about issues that affect mothers around the world so that we are all better able to support them and their newborns.

One aspect of maternal and infant health that has been gaining attention both in Ontario and around the world is the use of midwives as primary care providers. In Ontario, midwives are registered health professionals, like doctors and nurses, who are highly trained and whose practice is regulated by the College of Midwives of Ontario (CMO). Midwifery care is cost effective and high quality – statistics gathered since 1994 consistently show that midwife-delivered babies are healthy and have less need for further hospitalization or treatment (Association of Midwives of Ontario). Mothers who are under the care of a midwife undergo interventions like C-sections less frequently and are discharged from the hospital more quickly. With in-home follow-up care provided by the midwife, the strain on Ontario's hospitals is reduced.

Midwifery care is vital to mothers and infants in low-income countries, especially in isolated and rural areas. The World Health Organization describes midwifery care as being key to a healthy and safe pregnancy. Worldwide, approximately 1000 women and 10,000 newborns die daily because of preventable complications during pregnancy, childbirth, and the immediate time after childbirth (WHO). If every birth was attended by a midwife, many of these lives could be saved. After childbirth, midwives support mothers as they begin breastfeeding and educate to prevent the spread of HIV.

## Global shortage of skilled birth attendants

Globally, there is a shortage of skilled birth attendants and more than one third of all mothers give birth alone or attended by an untrained person (WHO, 2009). These untrained people are often traditional birth attendants or family members who aren't equipped to handle normal births or complications that arise during delivery. Millennium Development Goal #5 calls for more birth attendants to be trained and mobilized in order to increase the percentage of births attended by a skilled birth attendant to 95 percent by 2015.

Nicole McCloud is no stranger to the facts and figures associated with midwifery, both internationally and in Ontario. Trained in midwifery through a medical missions program in Idaho, she practised in the Philippines for several years, eventually becoming the director of a birth centre in a slum called Welfareville. Following her time in the Philippines, she spent several years in Uganda working towards her Master's degree in public health with the Save the Mothers program under the leadership of Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese. McCloud valued the chance to learn from Dr. Jean and others who are passionate about caring for mothers and supporting the vital role that mothers play in reducing poverty. McCloud also spent two years in Rwanda working to promote maternal health as a midwife and training national midwives. In 2011, she returned to Ontario to complete a bridging program for certification in Ontario. She is now working as a midwife in the Peel Region.

When asked about her personal vision for her work as



Nicole McCloud shares the joy of a Rwandan mother. Weighing an infant during a postpartum checkup.

a midwife, McCloud offers, "I want to promote compassionate maternal health care – something that goes beyond medical support, but offers care and dignity to mothers. I hope to work with midwives in less developed areas and train them to practise compassionate care as well."

Her passion for caring for mothers in challenging settings is evidenced in her stories of practising midwifery in Asia and Africa. "When I was working in Northern Uganda, I arrived at an IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) camp where a mom was in active labour with her third child," McCloud recalls, "and midway through the labour, the baby's heart rate began to decrease – the baby was in distress. In a camp with no electricity and few supplies, we weren't equipped to handle this emergency and I requested a transfer by ambulance to the hospital. The national midwife who was working with me explained that it would take four hours to reach the hospital, and that I was the best option for this mother and baby. It was overwhelming. We began to pray fervently, doing our best to support the mom. After several tense moments, the baby came out crying and healthy. I visited the mom the next day and met her older child who had cerebral palsy from lack of oxygen during birth. She had lost her second baby due to complications in childbirth. Seeing her holding a healthy newborn and knowing the difference we had made was humbling and inspiring."

## Life and death hanging in the balance

McCloud describes the difference between midwifery care in Ontario and working as a skilled birth attendant in Africa this way: "For moms in Ontario, the option of be-

ing in the care of a midwife throughout your pregnancy is often a very good experience, and empowers women to be a decision-maker, since pregnancy is only the beginning of many decisions she'll make as a mother. However, for moms living in low income areas in less developed countries, having a skilled birth attendant who practises compassionate care can be the difference between life and death."

Midwives in Ontario promote family-centered care and informed choice, focusing on giving mothers the power and freedom to choose what is best for their families. Midwives offer continuity of care throughout the pregnancy, delivery, and first weeks of the baby's life, building a trusting relationship with the mothers in their care. Mothers begin to know their care providers well and can ask questions and engage in discussion in order to understand their options and make informed choices for their families.

While working overseas in the Philippines, Rwanda and Uganda, McCloud saw the wider impact of maternal care and the benefits it brings to children, families and communities. "Caring for mothers reduces poverty," she explains, "because mothers are the greatest advocate and support for their children. If a mom dies, the risk of death for her young children increases tenfold because she is no longer breastfeeding, and is no longer able to care or advocate for their needs."

Compassionate care for mothers is not the norm in many parts of the world. In Uganda, where the lifetime maternal mortality rate is 1 in 35 (UN Population Fund 2011), maternal mortality is traditionally described using the analogy of a rose patch. Just like you risk getting pricked by thorns when you walk through a rose patch, you risk death when you are pregnant. Ugandans believe that is just the way it is. McCloud says, "The sad thing is that a high risk of death during childbirth is widely accepted there and it takes a long time to change that belief. It doesn't have to be this way. When skilled birth attendants care for mothers, their risk of dying in pregnancy or childbirth decreases dramatically."

McCloud hopes to return to Africa in 2014 with the organization that she founded, called *Delivering Hope*, to promote the profession of midwifery in Rwanda. She and her husband, Jon, plan to work in an independent health and wellness center where their medical skills will be used in providing care and training national staff. Nicole is passionate about training Rwandan midwives to practice compassionate care for mothers. "Rwanda lost an entire generation of healthcare providers in the 1994 genocide," she explains, "and as a country, they're in a rebuilding season. Training midwives to care for mothers and children in Rwanda is part of that rebuilding."

In Matt. 25, when Jesus invites his disciples to care for the "least of these," he makes it clear that when his followers actively support people who have been marginalized, he is honoured. Both locally and globally, Christians have the opportunity and responsibility to advocate for mothers and children and ensure they receive the care they need to thrive and to build healthy families and communities. By becoming informed about issues surrounding the compassionate care of mothers, including the expertise and support that midwives bring, I believe we are responding to Christ's call to minister to the "least of these."

Natasha Moes lives and writes in Mississauga and is passionate about her neighbours and community. Her wide-ranging interests include international development, social media, brewing good coffee and wondering about raising chickens on the balcony of a high rise.





## Features



Christian Courier is pleased to present this sixth and final article in a six-part series on First Nations topics. It's been an informative series and we thank our contributors, Seth Adema and James C. Schaap, for their perspectives and personal reflections. We encourage our readers to offer feedback either by way of a letter to the editor ([editor@christiancourier.ca](mailto:editor@christiancourier.ca)), comments online at [christiancourier.ca](http://christiancourier.ca) or by tweeting us at [twitter.com/ChrCourier](https://twitter.com/ChrCourier).

## Prisons in Canada: the litmus test for reconciliation?

Seth Adema

The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote in *Crime and Punishment* that the state of a society is measured in the prisons it builds. If we look in Canadian prisons, one of the first things that we will notice is that Aboriginal peoples are disturbingly overrepresented. This has been the case for many years, and patterns of incarceration have not changed for the better. The most recent study on the issue, completed in 2007, concluded that Aboriginal peoples are over six times more likely to see the inside of a federal prison than the rest of Canadian society. This is a problem with deep roots in the Canadian history of settling the nation. The current situation stems directly from that history. I believe that while reconciliation can take place in any area of Canadian society, we can see the need for change most clearly when we look in prisons.

When we take a closer look at the Aboriginal interactions with the criminal justice system in Canada, it becomes painfully obvious that the law is not, nor has it ever been, racially or ideologically neutral. Instead, ideologies and prejudices of the time when the law was developed were codified within it. This was most obvious in the potlatch ban of the early twentieth century, but sentencing practices concerning laws that were not racially defined were rooted in non-Aboriginal worldviews and have since been proven to be discriminatory. It is therefore important to consider not only the application of the law in Canada, but also the origins of the system of law that we have.

One important point to remember is that the legal framework that Canada uses was developed over many centuries in Great Britain and therefore reflects European rather than Aboriginal worldviews. The entire penal system is built on a Eurocentric theoretical base that did not have precedent in Aboriginal societies. The penitentiary system was designed to instill a set of values grounded on a Christian theology of *penitence*. Since its first application, the penal system in Canada remained one that aimed to instill a set of values that were foreign to Aboriginal peoples.

### Criminalizing Aboriginal cultures

Aboriginal peoples fell under the jurisdiction of the Canadian government through the Indian Act, a unilateral policy that declared Aboriginal peoples to be wards of the state. Some scholars have argued that the Indian Act and its subsequent revisions criminalized Aboriginal cultures, and in doing so made being an Aboriginal person in Canada a crime. Amendments to the Indian Act progressively tightened the control that governments had over the lives of Aboriginal peoples. Amendments to the Indian Act have made Aboriginal ceremonies criminally prosecutable offences, restricted movement and divided families. The criminal justice system never operated in isolation from the rest of Canadian colonialism, but rather was part of a much larger network that institutionalized Aboriginal peoples. Commentators have noted a direct link between Residential Schools as they operated in Canada and the way that the criminal justice system functions today. Within prisons, the limitations placed upon Aboriginal cultural expression were generally the most stringently applied and lasted for a much longer time.

Something that historians have begun to notice in the last 20 years or so is that even though Aboriginal peoples were faced with European incursions on their land and cultures, First Nations peoples always actively opposed



Idle No More protesters in Victoria, B.C. on December 21, 2012. Shawn Atleo, hereditary Chief of the Ahousaht First Nation, after being elected Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations in 2009.

imperialism; this was true in prisons as well. In the 1970s, a time when Aboriginal peoples were addressing long-term historical inequalities in new ways, a cultural movement emerged within prisons that confronted the problems they saw within the prison system, and indeed within Canadian colonial relationships in general, head on.

During the 1970s, several particularly active Aboriginal offenders began a movement that directly addressed the problems inherent within the way prisons operate in Canada. Correctional Services Canada identified a few Aboriginal men as problematic, and their method of preemptively putting out fires was to transfer those inmates whom they saw as the source of problems. Transferring these few men had the effect of spreading a cultural movement within prisons with which the correctional system was extremely uncomfortable. Thanks to the tireless efforts of many inmates and their surrounding communities, Aboriginal activists created an environment within many prisons where Aboriginal cultures were not ignored or disparaged, but instead were celebrated.

The initiatives that began at the grassroots level by Aboriginal inmates have had direct and meaningful implications on how prisons in Canada are run. Aboriginal Elders now operate at every major institution according to the needs of offenders. Many prisons hold regular Aboriginal events such as pow-wows and sharing circles. For many offenders, the first time they are taught Aboriginal cultural practices comes during their times in prison. The Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) was signed in

1992, and it made specific reference to the unique needs and circumstances of Aboriginal Canadians in federal corrections and in doing so it created a mandate for institutions to consider and plan for Aboriginal offenders. It further encouraged Aboriginal community involvement in the healing of offenders, and this has led to some very innovative and encouraging developments in the ways justice is served in Canada. In 1995 Correctional Services Canada opened its first Healing Lodge, which was a place where Aboriginal traditions were incorporated explicitly into the process of rehabilitating Aboriginal offenders.

### Bill C-10: disadvantageous

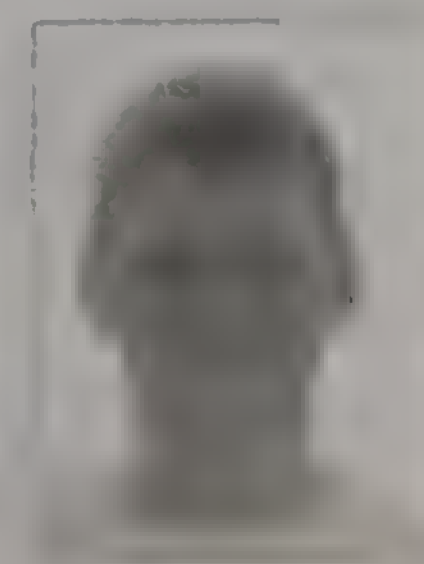
Sadly, recent trends have slowed down or even reversed the progress that was so hard won in the past 40 years. On March 13, 2012, the Canadian government enacted Bill C-10, the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*, which was widely publicized as part of a new "tough on crime" strategy to combat certain types of crime. Unstated was the fact that this legislation further alienated already marginalized groups, including Aboriginal peoples. By creating more harsh sentencing practices, many community level programs that have developed in Aboriginal communities cannot operate to their potential as young Aboriginal men and women fall into patterns of criminality. Dr. Perry Kendall, the provincial health officer for British Columbia, has spoken out against the bill, arguing that the new legislation effectively dismantles two decades worth of accomplishments in the treatment of young Aboriginal offenders. Shawn Atleo, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, has echoed these concerns.

In addition to Bill C-10, part-time chaplains have also been cut. Correctional Services Canada has opted for a "military-style" chaplaincy where clergy offer spiritual guidance to all inmates regardless of religion or creed. Towards this goal, the Canadian government eliminated nearly all non-Christian prison chaplains between September 2012 and March 2013. This was all in the name of reducing costs. This decision continues to have a devastating effect on the work done by Aboriginal Elders.

While there are problems facing Aboriginal peoples today, there can be hope for tomorrow. By recognizing and affirming Aboriginal peoples in all situations, Canada can become a place where reconciliation can take place. I hope that, in light of the history of Aboriginal-settler relationships, the importance of creating the space where reconciliation can take place is clear.

I have often pondered why Aboriginal experiences in prison is of such interest to me as a non-Aboriginal Canadian who has little direct experience with the criminal justice system. My previous articles in this series have focused on the importance of reconciliation, and if we are not able or willing to extend the hand of reconciliation to those who are the hardest hit by the legacy of Residential Schools and generations of colonialism, then our attempts towards reconciliation are empty at best. As Christians, we hold a responsibility to work towards the realization of God's kingdom while we are on earth. We could do worse than to begin this work in prisons.

Seth Adema is a PhD candidate in the department of history at Wilfrid Laurier University.





## Columns

## Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke

## Confessions of a coffee hound



I love coffee. I love everything about it – the aroma, the taste, the way it courses through my veins and revives me first thing in the morning. Some call it the acceptable Christian drug.

No wonder I'm addicted. I've been drinking coffee since first grade. Shocking, I know. But my mother wanted me to have a warm drink before I walked to school. Every morning she diluted a cup of instant coffee with enough cream and sugar to make it palatable to a six-year-old. I was probably the perkier (or maybe the edgiest) kid in the class. Coffee in those days was remarkably simple. My father preferred instant, insisting specifically on Nescafé. On Sunday mornings my mother always brewed a pot of "real" coffee and served it piping hot in bone china cups with saucers instead of the chipped mugs we used on other days of the week. "Good coffee tastes better from a good cup," she said.

At Christmas my Oma included two tins of Jakob's coffee beans in the annual parcel, along with other delectable goodies like German chocolate and hard salami that should never have cleared customs. As soon as the parcel was unpacked Ma would pull out the little handheld grinder from the top shelf of the cupboard. She sat down, wedged the device between her knees and ground exactly enough beans for one pot full of coffee. No matter that it wasn't Sunday – out came the bone china, as we eagerly awaited the delicious brew. It was a yearly tradition, ranked right up there with putting up the tree.

## Best part of waking up

I still have that grinder in my kitchen, along with the big stone coffee pot. The coffee pot and a small hanging mirror were the only household items that survived World War II in my mother's family. I also have a small electric grinder I picked up a few years ago, as well as the Melitta filter pot we used to make coffee when I was a teenager. My brother and I spent so many hours telling stories and swilling coffee from that pot that I cannot bear to throw it away, even though it's cracked and stained and has long outlived its usefulness.

Since we frequently ran out of cream and sugar at home, I learned to drink my coffee black by the time I was 10. When Jack and I got married, he, like my father, preferred instant coffee. But he muddled his with milk (not cream) and liked sweetener better than sugar. Ugh. The marriage survived despite our differences. With the advent of automatic coffeemakers I converted

him to the real deal. My life was good.

And then it started. My daughter Stephanie and son-in-law Aaron got one of those fandango Keurig machines. You know the kind. It sits on the counter, enticing you to pop in a K-cup and press the button. Two minutes later you have a freshly brewed cup of coffee. Does it get any better?

"What flavour would you like, Mom?" Aaron would ask.

At first I stuck to my purist convictions, "Columbian is fine, thanks." Gradually I softened, experimenting with flavours like hazelnut, German chocolate cake or Kahlua.

Then I found myself lurking in appliance aisles, reminding myself that Jack and I drink so much coffee we'd need a mortgage to cover a K-cup habit. And my cupboards already housed too much coffee paraphernalia.

## To the last drop

I taught my kids that when they wanted something non-essential, they should wait a day, a week or a month, depending on the price tag. Then if they still wanted it, at least it wasn't an impulse buy. I dreamed of owning a Keurig for almost a year.

Then one day, while I "randomly browsed" at Canadian Tire, there it was: a bright red, mini Mr. Coffee, priced at an incredible 20 percent off! I rehashed all of my reservations, finishing with the fact that our water is hard and quickly ruins any coffeemaker. *We could filter it, I suppose.*

The next thing I knew I was in the cashier's line, a Brita filter system in my cart, along with the adorable Mr. Coffee machine and two packages of flavoured K-cups. We would have rules to limit our consumption. Sure.

Jack laughed when I got home. "So you finally broke down," he said, popping in a French vanilla.

As I recounted the story I realized with horror that it reeked of original sin. I blamed someone else for introducing me to forbidden fruit, then I flirted with temptation until my resistance disappeared completely and now I had dragged my unsuspecting, but oh-so-willing husband into it. It's a slippery slope.

Drop by sometime and I'll tell you all about it. And you can have your choice of flavours, too.

Heidi Vander Slikke ([hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com](mailto:hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com))  
lives in Harriston, Ont.



## ARTFUL EYE



## Birth

... you knit me together in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13b

How arrogant to think  
the knitting stops  
the day we leave the womb

A final loop  
the knot is tied  
a breath is drawn  
a cry is cried  
and everyone declares  
the miracle is finished

But times will come  
when souls are bruised  
and ribs are cracked  
when sorrow's mist surrounds  
and grief knocks at the door

Through tears and pain and broken hearts  
we will cry again

And...

... quietly You'll start to knit  
... calmly You will start to weave  
... slowly You will make us whole

Because the miracle continues

Robert J. Gerryts

Robert J. Gerryts is a Computer Science teacher at Smithville Christian High, Ont



Marianne VanderSpek is a photographer living in Florence, Ont



## Columns

## Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer



## Sparing and spoiling

In my year-and-a-half of parenting, I have mainly been a care-giver. My daughter has needed cleaning, feeding and a consistent sleep schedule, and in the latter months, I've begun to introduce some learning activities and structured social interactions. But recently my role has begun to change, and I feel unprepared to fulfill it.

First thing in the morning I wake to a dictatorial little voice calling "Mama!" through the baby monitor. There she stands in the corner of her crib, her wild hair pointing east and north and especially south over her eyes, and points vehemently at her fallen soother on the floor. "Shoo-shoo," she says, almost as if she were issuing an order. I pick it up and take her to the change table, where she squirms to sit up and reaches for a clean diaper from the basket. Looking me right in the face, she drops it behind the change table. "No, no," I tell her for the hundredth time, but before I can move the diapers, she grabs two more and deposits them. As I whisk away the basket, she adds her undershirt and one of yesterday's shoes to the narrow repository that has become her hidden collection. There is no doubt about it: that expression on her round baby face is defiance.

This is my first foray into discipline, and it is harder than I expected. I intended to be a "tough" mom, rearing well-behaved kids through consistently enforced boundaries. I also expected to have children who were compliant and sensitive to authority. Faced with a real human being with her own characteristics and ideas, I'm finding everyday parenting challenging to navigate. First there is the situation itself, which often requires wisdom to interpret, and then there are contributing factors to consider. Is she tired or hungry? Are new teeth bothering her? Is she being playful, or is this a confrontation? Does she understand what she's doing and what I want from her?

## Choose your own adventure

Searching for some insight, I picked up James Dobson's *Dare to Discipline* the other day. While I support Dobson on many points and believe that loving your children sometimes requires the enforcement of boundaries, I felt conflicted when I read that his wife, Shirley, struck their disobedient 18-month-old daughter's legs with a switch. It may have worked, but I can't imagine myself in that scenario. Would my daughter understand what was happening? Could I bring myself to intentionally cause her pain? And yet without corporal punishment, do parents today have enough in their arsenal to maintain boundaries?

Then one evening I came across a striking TV show. A father and mother in rural New Hampshire were raising their kids without rules, without discipline, even without school. The parents referred to themselves as "radi-



*The God who imagined our children now looks on them with joy.*

cal unschoolers," meaning that the children were not even home-schooled, they were left to "learn from the world." The mother lovingly described how, if her children wanted to jump on the trampoline at two in the morning, they were welcome to do so. There were no bed times, just as there were no limitations of any kind. The parents considered all family members equals with equal rights and an equal say in the household. I was glued to the TV with a mixture of horror and curiosity.

What is a Christian parent to make of the multitude of parenting styles? If I believed my child was a perfectly innocent being born into a kind world, allowing her to develop unhindered might be a real option. But, like me, she was born at war with herself. On one hand she will sense the truth and desire it, and on the other, she will be blindsided by her own attempts to oppose it at every turn. Somehow, I must keep pointing her back, and I'll have to do it by example. The words of the Proverbs ring in my ears: "raise up a child in the way she should go. . . ."

But then again, there is love. And grace. And goodness. A gospel that turned this kingdom on its head by undercutting law with mercy. I want her to know this truth, too. I want her to know that the God who imagined her in the very beginning now looks at her with joy. That, too, she will learn by example.

So, although I have to raise this little girl, it is really me who has to grow. I am afraid of the maturity required of me, but for the sake of the daughter I love, I find myself chasing it with urgency. Parenting will force me to walk more humbly and to cling more fervently than I've ever done. It will force me to accept discipline and grace moment by moment, just as I must dispense it to my child. Through my role as a parent, God is parenting me.

*Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and daughter and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She is nervously embarking on Somerset Maugham's tome, *Of Human Bondage*.*

## Principalities &amp; Powers

David Koyzis



## A transient triumph for Hungary's Orbán?



Viktor Orbán has been prime minister of Hungary since 2010, with his Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union and allied Christian Democratic People's Party holding more than two-thirds of parliamentary seats. This is his second stint in office, and his actions during this time have stirred controversy at home and abroad.

Hungary was the first of the communist countries to move towards democracy as early as 1988, when its government announced that it would legalize multiple political parties the following year. Yet while other countries made a clean break with their totalitarian past, until recently Hungary had continued to function under its heavily amended communist-era constitution. Only after the start of Orbán's second premiership was he able to give his country a new post-communist constitutional document, which came into effect on the first day of last year.

Indeed numerous headlines have denounced Orbán's apparent assault on democracy. European Union officials in Brussels charge that his policies violate the EU treaties to which Hungary is bound. The United States has also expressed its concerns over the apparent threat to democracy by the government in Budapest.

## The second Hungarian uprising

Writing for *Bloomberg*, Max Berley portrayed Orbán's reforms as a power grab aimed at consolidating prime ministerial power and eroding the checks and balances within the system. Among these reforms include the appointment of a close associate to the governorship of the central bank, apparently compromising its independence; a ban on political advertising in all but state-owned media; and stripping the Constitutional Court of its authority to determine the constitutionality of laws, which critics believe endangers judicial independence. Finally, the new constitution changes the country's name from *Republic of Hungary* to just *Hungary*.

On the other hand, not everyone is fearful of Hungary's direction, and some are positively enthusiastic. An editorial in *The Scotsman* last year proclaimed that the "Second Hungarian uprising is as inspirational as the first," an allusion to the failed attempt in 1956 to leave the Soviet bloc. Accordingly, not only is democracy not under threat; it has been strengthened under Orbán's new constitution. "In the moral desert of 21st-century Europe, it is startling to find this gem of traditional values, patriotic assertion and respect for genuine freedom."

Among other things, the new constitution, titled the Fundamental Law of Hungary, pays homage to the country's Christian past and claims, following conservative philosopher Edmund Burke, to be a contract between Hungarians past, present and future. It extols the role of the family in the nation, recognizes marriage as a union of a man and a woman, and claims to defend human life from conception. It also abolishes the statute of limitations on atrocities committed during the communist era in a country where former communists not only escaped prosecution but became the *nouveau riche* under the new régime. Finally it upholds the historic position of the cherished Crown of St. Stephen as the repository of the country's values and political life.

So who is right? The EU and much of the western media? Or Orbán and the *Scotsman*? Having read through an English translation of the document, I find nothing standing out as particularly offensive to or subversive of democratic institutions, except possibly for article D, which commits the state to bearing responsibility for the millions of ethnic Hungarians living in the surrounding states.

However, one element of the constitutional process remains troublesome. A written constitution is supposed to represent the consensus of a people — a consensus transcending partisan and other divisions. Democrats and Republicans alike in the U.S. revere the United States Constitution, whatever differences they might otherwise have. The same cannot be said of Hungary's new Fundamental Law, which represents only Fidesz and its allies. Even if for now they have a two-thirds majority within parliament, they will not always have this. When and if the opposition parties return to power, they may decide to scrap it and start over.

Orbán would have done better to convene an all-party constitutional conference to hammer out a document commanding broader consensus. Because he did not do so, it remains to be seen whether the Fundamental Law, whatever its virtues, will survive the next change of government.

*David T. Koyzis has taught politics at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, for just over a quarter of a century. His next book on authority, office and the image of God is forthcoming from Pickwick Publications, a division of*

*Wipf & Stock*

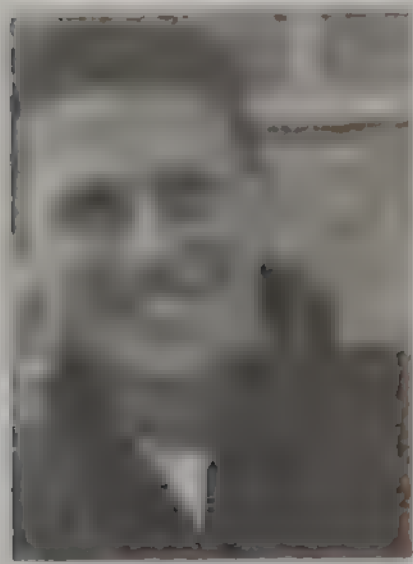


## Columns

## Borderless

Brent van Staaldunnen

## How a church found us



## Church on Friday, the Muslim holy day

A blinding day, as usual, with the temperature nudging past 45 degrees and the AC on the bus barely keeping up. We're not the only ones looking for a weekly connection to our faith – the bus is packed with tired, working bodies with a half day off for mosque or church. Rosalee and I, eager to try out a new Anglican church advertised in a British business magazine, sweat and sway and watch for our stop.

The ad was out of date. We miss the service, stand at the back as the echoes fade. Sonny, the warden, welcomes us with handshakes and walks us down to the social hall. The Evangelical Church of Kuwait compound is a beehive, dozens of congregations of every race, place and creed. Hundreds of services every Friday. Space at a premium, so refreshments happen elsewhere.

"You are an answer to prayer!"

Father Chris, a slight Pakistani man, approaches, arms wide. These are his first words to us, our baptism to St. Paul's Anglican, a small congregation – 50 bodies or so with the enthusiasm of 100 – filing in and out of the appropriate slot in the jammed ECK calendar. My wife and I look at each other, pleased and embarrassed all at once. Neither has been called that before, as though just by walking through the door we're meeting a need. Welcomed across a threshold to a home that knows we're family even before we do.

## Mutual need

Not just us, either. There are often new faces, welcomed just as openly the next week, making church into a home because the welcome is pure. The need is pure. The involvement is immediate, as deep and regular as you want it to be, are called to. Within a year, a couple of transplants, one who grew up CRC and the other Pentecostal, are working on the parish council helping to call a new priest. No one ever asks us to sign membership papers. We feel like we've been welcomed into a brotherhood of shepherds.

We make the call. In comes Father Andy, a man infused with evangelism and a love for interfaith dialogue, with a propensity for breaking out a guitar or magic tricks in the middle of sermons. His style clashes with the corrupt local leadership of the church compound so we move elsewhere in the city, to a villa tucked away in a Kuwaiti neighbourhood. Hard to find. But still the newcomers come, keeping the basement worship and Eucharist services full and fresh.

It's an amazing thing to feel joy in worship and in the people with whom we break bread. Joyful servants, drawn from all over – Canada, America, Kenya, China, Holland, India, The Philippines, Nigeria, the UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand – and the studious pursuit of scripture and faith-based discussions rather than theology and dogma. Harmony in our common denominator, the only salvation issue we have, the one where we believe that Jesus is the son of God, that he died and rose for us, that he will come again, that we are called to serve. Amazing how joyous church can be when it's about serving in faith rather than looking for the next argument. An amazing thing to be an answer to prayer purely because we're us.

Maybe I've never really felt joy in church before. True joy, that makes Christ's body excited to participate and serve. Called to a church compound and a hidden villa not by membership or paperwork or bureaucratic propriety but by the common desire to be a part of the body of believers, regardless of one's heritage, church affiliation or theological stripes.

## Home again

A few years pass, and we're back in Canada, welcomed into another joyful, dynamic congregation that never asks us to sign anything or prove our theological mettle. The welcome is pure again. We feel at home again. The realization that, for the first time in my life, I'm excited that our weekend morning routine has to include worship. Where we can gather in the gorgeous Anglican sanctuary, warts and jeans and burdens, and direct our voices heavenwards, thankful for the unmerited opportunity to serve.

One day, there's a phone call. A CRC I attended for a couple of years in the 90s has finally noted my absence and is wondering to which CRC they should send my membership papers. Papers I've never seen. I could have them sent to our new church, which would dutifully accept and file them away somewhere. I could order them destroyed, thus concluding a strangely detached little paper trail. Or I could do nothing at all, and let that church decide about those forgotten papers. I could focus instead on the joy of being found, called home, an answer to prayer.

*Brent and his wife Rosalee now live in the Westdale neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont. with their first child. To find out more about Brent and his writing, visit [brentvans.com](http://brentvans.com).*



*Still highly dangerous, more than 30 years later.*

## Country Living

Meindert van der Galien



Thirty-three years ago this month, Mount St. Helens erupted and thousands of tonnes of ash, mud, water and debris swept down into the valley beneath it. It was the deadliest and most economically de-

structive volcanic event in the history of the United States.

My wife and I traveled through Washington State last summer, and we decided to take a look at the mountain and the surrounding countryside. We wanted to witness Mount St. Helens' slow but steady recovery and journey through its healing landscape, which showcased nature's awesome power.

On the way to the mountain there's a small motel with a sign out front that reads "Hope you had a blast!" Similar signs touting a blast or eruption can be seen at a service station and other small businesses. It's small town charm! Hunting, fishing and logging are the main industries in the area, but tourism has also become a huge industry.

Four world-class visitor centres tell the story of the mountain and the people living in the region surrounding it. Located along Spirit Lake Highway, the centres are filled with pictures, stories and interactive displays that complement the sheer awe of the mountain. The awesome views from each location are unsurpassed, bringing visitors up-close to an historic event. We spoke with folks who had seen and experienced the eruption firsthand.

The Mount St. Helens Visitor Center at Silver Lake explains the events leading up to the eruption. Admission for adults is only three dollars.

The Hoffstadt Bluffs Visitor Center (free admission) and Johnston Ridge Observatory (eight dollars admission) gives visitors a close-up view of the mountain and the north side. It's a 90 minute winding road drive from the main highway

## Devastation

Beyond the centres are opportunities for people to hike, bike, sightsee and picnic while experiencing firsthand the pure beauty of the mountain and the area. Up to 250,000 people take in the spectacular view at the Observatory each year, and about 13,000 people hike to the crater rim to see the newest lava dome, which began form-

## Anniversary of an awesome eruption

ing when the volcano reawakened in 2004.

The countryside in front of us at Silver Lake, with the once magnificent mountain in the background, looked so peaceful and so picture-postcard-perfect from a distance. It was hard to fathom that all hell broke loose up there, ruining the countryside for miles and taking the lives of people who loved the mountain.

Today, one thing remains missing. The peak is gone.

The May 18, 1980 violent explosion knocked off 1,300 feet of the 9,665-foot peak. The removal of the north side of the mountain (the side we were looking at) left a crater one mile wide and 2,000 feet deep, with its north end open in a huge breach.

The eruption triggered the largest landslide in recorded history, laid waste to 230 square miles of forest and choked 14 miles of river valley with mud. It killed 57 people, nearly 7,000 big game animals (elk, deer and bear) and an estimated 12 million fish from a hatchery. It destroyed or extensively damaged over 250 homes, 47 bridges, 185 miles of highway and 15 miles of railways.

## Restoration

We also learned that more than 1.5 million tonnes of sulfur dioxide were released into the atmosphere. Over 1,000 commercial flights were cancelled following the eruption. During peak summer months more than 800 truckloads of salvageable timber was retrieved each day. Employees planted 18.4 million trees by hand in an effort to rebuild some of the forest after the blast. It took workers four years to complete the project. From October 2004 through to January 2008, the ongoing minor eruptions produced over 125 million cubic metres of lava, enough to pave a three-foot thick, seven lane highway from Portland, Oregon to New York City.

But there is good news. Once barren of wildlife after the eruption, the mountain and area is now abuzz with birds and animals; plant life is slowly returning. That's like our spring! After a long winter it's good to see things greening up and animals happily grazing in the fields.

*Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew-area (eastern Ontario) farmer and agricultural writer. He enjoys travelling and sightseeing.*



## News



## C.S. Lewis: A Life

*On the 50th anniversary of his death, this new C.S. Lewis biography succeeds in deepening the appeal of his works.*

apologist for Christian doctrine. In conjunction with the anniversary, author Alister McGrath has released a new C.S. Lewis biography, with a companion volume on Lewis' thought due out later this year.

### A scholarly fan

*C.S. Lewis: A Life* follows in the footsteps of several other Lewis biographies, some of them penned by friends and acquaintances of the famous writer. "Unlike his earlier biographers . . . I never knew Lewis personally," McGrath tells readers. "I have no illuminating memories, no privileged disclosures, and no private documents on which to draw. . . . This is a book written by someone who discovered Lewis through his writings, for others who have come to know Lewis in the same way."

Making a virtue of necessity, McGrath attempts to offer a critical perspective on Lewis in lieu of firsthand testimony, a strategy that emphasizes scholarship rather than chatty anecdote. McGrath proves copious in his research, although his narrative method tends to keep Lewis at arm's length.

McGrath is fond of using the editorial "we" in his sentences,

as if he's implicating the reader in an extended classroom lecture. It's a way of writing that routinely points to McGrath as the narrator of the story, rather than to Lewis, the man ostensibly at the center of the book. What one misses in *C.S. Lewis: A Life* is the cunning illusion promised by the best biographies – the feeling that one is immersed within a life as it's being lived.

But McGrath is nothing if not thorough, taking full advantage of some recent resources not available to earlier biographers. Most notable is the extensive collection of Lewis' correspondence published between 2000 to 2006. "These letters, essential to Lewis scholarship, form the narrative backbone of this biography," McGrath writes.

Most of the story in McGrath's book will be familiar to readers of earlier Lewis biographies. Born in Belfast in 1898 to an upper middle-class family, Lewis spent his childhood in a rambling house that had more than a passing resemblance to the setting of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The tranquility of Lewis's early youth gave way to turmoil when his mother died, prompting his father to place him in a series of oppressive board-

ing schools. Isolated, Lewis took solace in books, giving himself the first lessons he'd use in a career in letters. Eventually, Lewis found a mentor in William Thompson Kirkpatrick, a former school master whose cultivated skepticism fueled Lewis' growing doubts about orthodox religion. Lewis became an atheist, a position he retained into his early academic career as a scholar of English literature at Oxford.

Christian thinker in the years between 1930-1932. McGrath points out that Lewis' conversion was part of a larger wave nudging fellow intellectuals such as T.S. Eliot and Evelyn Waugh into the church. Lewis, says McGrath, "fits into a broader pattern at this time – the conversion of literary scholars and writers *through and because of their literary interests*. Lewis's love of literature is not a backdrop to his conversion; it is integral to his discovery of the rationale and imaginative appeal of Christianity."

McGrath's observation is central to his biography, which suggests that the best way to understand Lewis is to know what he read and wrote. The most abiding gift of *C.S. Lewis: Life* is its fierce curiosity about the novels, letters, and books of popular philosophy that are Lewis' most substantial legacy. McGrath's biography promises to introduce new readers to those works – and inspire veteran C.S. Lewis fans to visit them again.

*Danny Heitman, an author and columnist for The Baton Rouge Advocate, is an adjunct professor at LSU's Manship School of Mass Communication.*



*Lewis's love of literature is more than a backdrop to his conversion; it is integral to it.*

### Road to faith paved by letters

McGrath, who admits to following a similar path from skepticism to religious faith, seems most engaged at the midpoint of *C.S. Lewis: A Life*, when he carefully charts Lewis's evolution from nonbeliever to fervent

**"If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world."**

– C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

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## Classifieds

Birth	Anniversary	Obituaries	
<p>Brent &amp; Rosalee van Staalduinen, are pleased and thankful to announce the safe arrival of their first child,</p> <p><b>Nora Lee van Staalduinen,</b></p> <p>born March 27, 2013.</p> <p>Nora, which means "light", is brightening the days of proud grandparents Ralph &amp; Margaret Roth and Bill &amp; Grace van Staalduinen, as well as adoring aunts and uncles Randall &amp; Carrie, Russell, Ryan &amp; Melissa, Kirsten &amp; Sean, Dennis &amp; Jeanette, Sharon &amp; Wayne, and cousins Ben, Kayle, Shannon, Nicole, Erin, Leigha, Rachel, Elliot, Archer, Tyler, and Grayson.</p>	<p>1963      May 10      2013</p> <p><i>"Because You are my help, I sing in the shadows of Your wings."</i> Psalm 63:7</p> <p>With thankfulness to God for His faithfulness, we celebrate the</p> <p><b>50th Wedding Anniversary</b> of our parents and grandparents</p> <p><b>LEEN &amp; AGATHA VAN DE BAN</b> (nee Amsinga)</p> <p>Leo – Winnipeg, Man. Clarence &amp; Merlene – Winnipeg, Man. Dennis Jane &amp; Darryl – London, U.K. Steven &amp; Eang – Edmonton, Alta. Harvey &amp; Doreen – Hamilton, Ont. Sember, Caleb Brian &amp; Angie – Winnipeg, Man. Maxwell, Benjamin, Mattias</p> <p>May God continue to bless and lead you.</p> <p>Address: 42440 Hydro Line Road, RR 1 Seaforth ON N0K 1W0</p>	<p>Helmond, NB The Netherlands      Grimsby, ON Canada June 7, 1929      April 5, 2013</p> <p><b>Adriaan Willem Schouten</b></p> <p>was Promoted to Glory on April 5th at the age of 83</p> <p>Loving husband to Irene N. Schouten-Meynen, caring father to three sons and their wives and affectionate grandfather to nine grandchildren:</p> <p>Johannes and Phyllis Schouten – Burnaby, B.C. Seth, Grace, Rachel, Sarah Dirk-Bastiaan and Mary Ann Schouten – Guelph, Ont. Mattea, Elyse Jasper and Alissa Schouten – St Davids, Ont. Noah, Leah, Calvin</p> <p>Adriaan will be missed by his friends and the extended family in Southern Ontario and the Netherlands. A gentle and hardworking man and a great storyteller, Adriaan will be remembered for his love of plants and his many years as a wholesaler at the Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto. We celebrate the life he was given and commend his spirit to God.</p> <p>A service of Thanksgiving was held on April 12, 2013 at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church in Grimsby.</p> <p><i>"I am the resurrection and the life."</i> John 11:25</p> <p>Correspondence: Mrs I. N. Schouten-Meynen 273 Central Ave Grimsby ON L3M 1X6</p>	
Vacation	Retirement	<p><b>Alice Slofstra</b></p> <p>age 88, beloved wife of Rev. Lammert Slofstra, went home to the Saviour she loved since she was a little girl. She was suddenly called to higher glory on April 29, 2013.</p> <p>She is survived and lovingly remembered by her husband of 62 years, her children</p> <p>Peter and Marja Slofstra – Courtice, Ont. Bert and Diane Slofstra – Abbotsford, B.C. Grace and Bill Hoogland – Abbotsford, B.C. John and Fran Slofstra – Victoria, B.C. Jane and Jack Bosman – Kitchener, Ont.</p> <p>17 grandchildren and 40 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Correspondence: 9030 - 158 St., Apt. 304, Surrey BC V4N 5G4</p>	
<p><b>Holiday accomodation in Holland</b> with vehicle rentals, tours.</p> <p><a href="http://www.chestnutlane.nl">www.chestnutlane.nl</a></p> <p><b>Housekeeping cottages</b> (2 - two bedroom, 1-three bedroom) on Georgian Bay near Killbear Provincial Park north of Parry Sound Ontario. Sandy beach and bottom, level rock for walking, water deepens gradually.</p> <p><a href="http://www.jacknifecottages.com">www.jacknifecottages.com</a>. Contact us at 416-818-4505 or <a href="mailto:lynn@jacknifecottages.com">lynn@jacknifecottages.com</a>.</p>	<p><b>Pastor James Dekker</b> of Covenant CRC in St. Catharines, Ont. will be retiring in June.</p> <p>Everyone is invited to an open house at Beacon Christian School on Friday, <b>June 7</b> at 8:00 p.m. This will be a time of celebration and thanksgiving for Pastor Jim's 35.5 years of faithful service as a missionary and minister.</p> <p>Also, a special farewell worship service will be held on Sunday, <b>June 23</b> at Covenant CRC at 10 a.m.</p> <p>For further details call 905-937-3942.</p>		



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Speaker: Rev. Peter Van Egmond: *Wat de toekomst brengen moge.*  
For more info call (613) 546-5615.

**June 19**  
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Speaker: Rev. John Klomps.  
Details next issue.

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Anyone interested in this position is invited to submit an application to Sue Kikkert, Secretary of the Human Resource Team, at [suekikkert@hotmail.com](mailto:suekikkert@hotmail.com).

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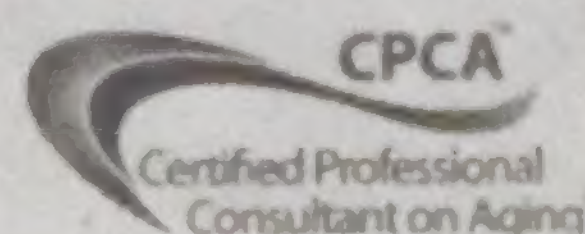
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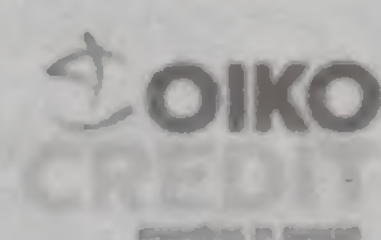
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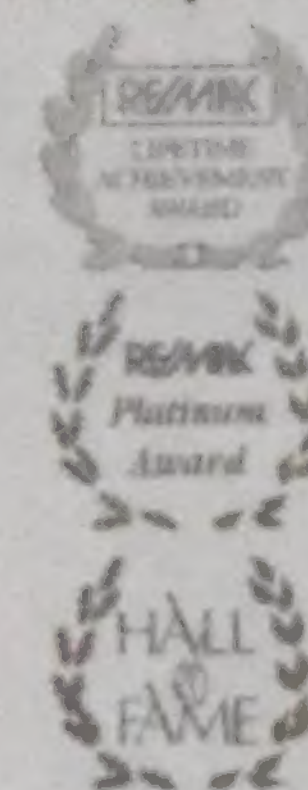
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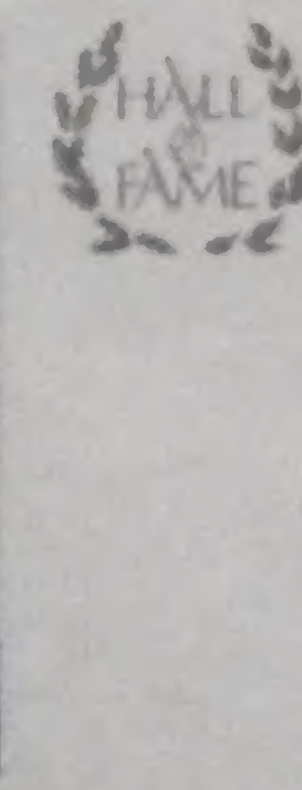
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## Events/Advertising

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**May 31 - June 1** Toronto District Christian School 50th anniversary. See ad or [tdchristian.ca](http://tdchristian.ca)

**June 5** Hollandse Dag 10:00 am at First CRC, 310 Kingscourt Ave. **Kingston, Ont.**  
Speaker: Rev. Peter Van Egmond: *Wat de toekomst brengen moge*. For more info call (613) 546-5615.

**June 7** Retirement open house for Pastor James Dekker. See p.17 for details

**June 9** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Herman Praamsma will be preaching. DVDs are available.

**June 19** Hollandse Dag **Moorefield** Community Centre. 10 am. Speaker: Rev. John Klomps. Details next issue.

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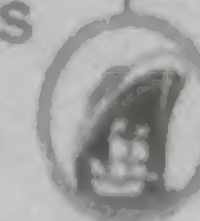
Our first rehearsal/social will be held August 19 2013, 7:00 PM at Redeemer University College, 777 Garner Rd, Ancaster ON.

For registration info please follow the link to:  
[www.martinmans.nl/libertas](http://www.martinmans.nl/libertas). Tel. 905 522 0001  
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Thanks be to God! It's the 50th anniversary of Toronto District Christian High School and you are invited to be a part of the fun!

**Friday, May 31:** See the school in action from 9-3. Watch student presentations of learning. Former teachers are invited for a special luncheon.

**Saturday, June 1:** Connect with friends at 2 events:

- Free Open House from 11-2.
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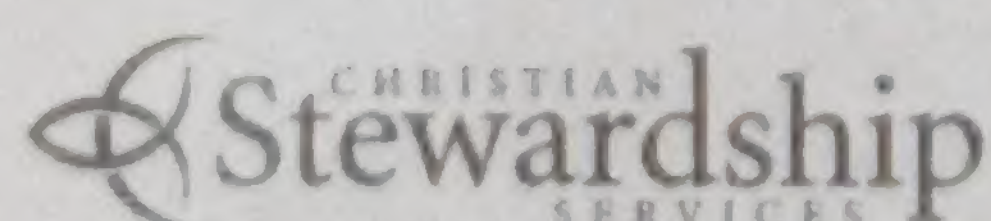
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## News

## Politics in the spotlight:

Unique theatre group creating *The Pipeline Project*

Bethany Van Lingen

Jonathan Seinen spent three months on the road in British Columbia researching oil pipelines for a play. The most powerful experience of the research road trip, Seinen says, was an evening spent in a sweat lodge. In the dark tent, participants poured water on rocks so steam rose, offered songs and prayers for the earth's healing and gave tribute to the ancestors now part of the ground on which the group sat.

"It gave me a chance to consider that I was born here and that I have a connection to this land. I was with a people who've been there for thousands of years, whose culture is tied up in that land. In the sweat lodge, those realities became my experience," says Seinen, co-artistic producer at Architect Theatre.

That experience was part of the first leg of production for *The Pipeline Project*, a play by Architect Theatre. *The Pipeline Project* is a working title for a theatre piece narrating the pipeline debate in B.C. From November to December 2012, Seinen and Georgina Beaty, also co-artistic producer, travelled with their director Anita Rochon and an acoustic artist Jennifer Schine to record the stories of communities affected by and activists fighting against the pipeline.

Seinen hopes to include a sweat lodge experience in the theatre production of *The Pipeline Project*, but only with the help of First Nations communities.

"We don't want to appropriate what isn't ours," Seinen says.

## Here they stand

The same seems to be true of oil pipelines in B.C. There remain territories in B.C. owned by First Nations communities and untouched by treaties, Seinen says. The oil pipelines proposed for construction will cross through aboriginal territory. They also are poised to destroy elements of B.C.'s environment.

During the research trip, Seinen interviewed those in communities close to the pipe-

line and activists for and against the development. He was surprised by how willing people are to stand up against the oil pipelines – especially two retired elementary school teachers and activists. As bird fanatics, they have dedicated their retirement to fighting for bird habitats and against the pipeline.

"I was shocked by how far people are willing to go to defend their home, even if it means getting in front of bulldozers.

When the situation calls for it, they'll be there. It's inspiring and sad, but it demon-



Jonathan Seinen, co-artistic producer of *The Pipeline Project*. Inset: Georgina Beaty, co-artistic producer.

strates a conviction that's admirable," Seinen says.

Conviction for the environment also motivates Beaty to bring plays on ecological issues to stage. The natural world fascinates her, as do the decisions made about the Canadian landscape. Architect Theatre's previous productions include one about Fort McMurray.

"I worry about the politics that come into questions around our environment. There shouldn't be a left or right approach to how we take care of our world," Beaty says.

## Introducing . . . B.C.

By putting the politics of the environment on stage, Beaty tries to find a way for the audience to connect to debates like that over the B.C. oil pipeline. In stories told on stage, Beaty and Seinen make visual their interviews with sources, the towns and aboriginal peoples affected.

This is Architect Theatre's third play. Seinen and Beaty started Architect Theatre in 2008. The two, both co-artistic producers at the theatre com-

pany, met at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alta. They were both completing a Bachelor of Arts in drama. They stayed in touch after leaving Alberta for theatre school. Today, they run the theatre company together, while balancing other projects.

"We run the company by being in the same city for six weeks," Seinen says.

They hope to work on the structure of the play, including a script and stage design, in August and September 2013. During those six weeks together, they won't keep office hours. Paperwork is put aside. It's time to make theatre.

The ideas so far are to create a visual representation of the beauty of B.C. on stage. The B.C. landscape is a character of its own in the show and the pipeline debate. Seinen and Beaty also plan to work with a puppeteer to animate the land on stage. They hope to have some of the community members interviewed tell their stories on stage.

Supporters of Architect Theatre fund *The Pipeline Project* by donating on the website Indiegogo. Seinen and Beaty also billeted funds during their research trip to B.C. They will apply for Canadian Council funding and for provincial grants once they bring *The Pipeline Project* to stage, Beaty says.

*The Pipeline Project* has had an incredible amount of support, Beaty says. This support runs from donors to hours of talk and meals, thanks to the hospitality of those interviewed for the play.

Bethany Van Lingen (bethany.vanlingen@gmail.com) is a Bachelor of Journalism student at Ryerson University in Toronto. She is also a member of Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Cambridge, Ont.



## Odds and Trends

## Smooth as shrilk

Harvard researchers have invented a new substance called "shrilk." It combines components from discarded shrimp shells and silk proteins for a material that is tough, flexible and – best of all – biodegradable. It's described as thin, clear, flexible and as strong as aluminum at half the weight.

"In the future," *National Geographic* says, "it may be used to make everything from wound dressings to trash bags to disposable diapers. And it might make many landfill-choking plastics obsolete."



Harvard researchers hold up a piece of shrilk.

## Prepackaged fruit

On another continent, another invention will reduce waste – from bananas.

Cindy Verbeek, staff member of A Rocha Canada and occasional *Christian Courier* contributor, is currently traveling through Africa as part of the We Have Faith Environmental Expedition (see page 4 for more). On Apr. 21, she visited A Rocha Uganda in Namungoona, near Kampala. "It is my second home," Verbeek writes on her blog. "It is where I find kindred spirits and brothers and sisters in Christ, and I am excited to discover what God wants me to do to help this fine organization."

Verbeek describes one of their projects to find a sustainable fuel source. Most families in Uganda do not have electric or gas stoves – they burn charcoal to heat their food. A Rocha has developed a type of charcoal made from recycled banana peels and other dried organic material. The peels are burned, crushed, mixed with clay and cassava flour (as a glue) and rolled into balls. These unique briquettes burn with less smoke, reducing air pollution; they burn longer, which saves time and money; and they protect trees from being harvested to make regular charcoal.



A Rocha staff members Ayoti, Carol and Cindy.

Matooke, a kind of banana, is a staple diet of the Ugandan people, Verbeek points out. A family of five will use 40 each day. The briquettes give a previous garbage item new purpose.

## Your second act

A Rocha's innovation may qualify for a \$100,000 Purpose Prize, if seniors did the work. A recent conference called Encore 2013 welcomed 200 leaders in a growing movement that encourages "people in the latter years of their lives to devote themselves to solving tough social problems," *Utne* magazine reports. *Encore.org* is an organization dedicated to helping people over 60 find "purpose, passion and a paycheck in [their] second act."

The conference included the eighth annual awarding of the Purpose Prizes – one grand apiece for five individuals who have in different ways improved their communities and the world. For example, one of this year's winners helps foreclosed homeowners keep their homes; another assists ex-cons in building new lives.

"The idea is that after you've retired from your more conventional working life, it's time for your 'encore career,' time to give something back to meet society's biggest challenges."

Does that include . . . protesting? In February, writer and environmental activist Bill McKibben, 53, was among those arrested at the White House for protesting the Keystone XL pipeline. He says that "older people have the time, energy and responsibility to do everything they can to help heal our broken world. And they don't have to worry about having an arrest record on their resumes."

– Angela Reitsma Bick